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THE SACRED PRESENCE OF THE GURU:

THE VELALA LINEAGES OF

TIRUVAVATUTURAI, DHARMAPURAM, AND TIRUPPANANTAL

By

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A thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a set of Saiva religious institutions, the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, the Dharmapuram Adhinam, and the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal, all located in Tamilnadu, India. Preliminary research indicated that models of monastic retreat and seminary yield incomplete and sometimes distorted pictures of the institutions in their social setting. Mindful of the dynamic character of these institutions, this thesis endeavours to construct a better model of understanding the institutions' basic structure.

This work used a variety of sources to gauge the institutions' scope of activity. These sources ranged from classical material, inscriptions, hagiographies, doctrinal and ritual writings, to contemporary records, first-person observation and interviews. In addressing the question of basic structure, the thesis argues that though these three institutions are conveniently called Saiva matas, the matam and the religious institution represent two different abstract entities.

The work suggests that the religious institution is structured around the concept of lineage. The institution is above all an aggregate of religious individuals tied together by "fictive kin" ties. Though ascetic, the members of the institution are individuals who see themselves as related to each other through their relationship to a line of preceptors, from whom they are reborn through the rites of

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initiation. The work discusses in some detail the nature of the different stages of initiation, it examines how group membership is articulated in ritual patterns, and it establishes that the self-identity of the group as a whole is intimately tied in with its description of its pedigree.

The work also demonstrates that the matam, as part of the Hindu temple complex, often housed religious groups such as those studied, but the matam and the religious institution defined by the group are not coterminous. The thesis demonstrates that the matam is a site within the Hindu temple complex where ritualized forms of gifting occurs and suggests that a specific form of dana (gifting) informed by values of lineage propitiation helps account for the settlement of ascetic lineage groups at temple sites.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND NAMES

In this thesis, the problem of rendering Indian terms into Roman letters is compounded by source material in not one, but two languages, Sanskrit and Tamil. To preserve the tenor of this material and to avoid any unwitting distortion, I use two schemes of transliteration in this thesis, one for Tamil sources and one for Sanskrit sources. I use the Tamil Lexicon system of transliteration for Tamil terms. For material from Sanskrit sources, I use the Library of Congress method of transliteration. Throughout, I note the language of the original source. For reasons of readability, I have chosen to omit diacritical marks. The glossary lists terms with diacritical marks in place.

There are numerous terms common to both languages that are basic to the material in the thesis. Matha (Sanskrit) or matam (Tamil), a term at the very heart of the thesis, is one such example. In such instances, there is no simple answer as to which form of transliteration should be used, as the choice of one language over the other has implications that go beyond scholarly concerns. While aware of some of these implications, I have chosen to use the Tamil form, matam, plural matas, because this work deals with a set of Tamil institutions. When I am referring to such centres (mathas) outside of Tamilnadu, I use the Sanskrit term.

In general, when my discussion deals with aspects of the Tamil institutions that are the focus of this work, I use Tamil transliterations. For example, I refer to the head of the institution as kurumakacannitanam (Tam) instead of gurumahasannidhanam (Skt).

There are instances where I have deviated from this scheme for the sake of readability, especially for those familiar with Indian terms, but not necessarily trained in Tamil. For terms whose usage is almost standardized in English works on India, I adopt the commonly used form, e.g., puja, as opposed to pucai; brahmin, as opposed to piramanan. For other Sanskrit loan words whose Tamil transliteration would render them virtually unrecognizable, I use the Sanskrit transliteration. In places where the context demands a Tamil transliteration, as for example when I provide a translation, I use the Tamil form, but also provide a Sanskrit transliteration in parenthesis, e.g., titcai (Skt. diksa).

In the glossary located at the end of this work, I have listed the terms I have used, providing both the Tamil and Sanskrit transliterations.

I have also been slightly inconsistent with names, choosing to compromise between strict Lexicon transliterations and Anglicized (or Sanskritized) forms commonly encountered in South India. For example, I use "Dharmapuram Adhinam" instead of the more strict "Tarumapura

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Atinam", because the centre uses that form on its English letterhead and in its English publications. For that same reason, the name of another institution appears as the "Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal", and not the "Kaci Matam of Tiruppanantal". Where a term appears in several forms, such as Dharmapuram Adhinam, Tiruvavatuturai Adheenam, Madura Aadheenam, I have, somewhat arbitrarily, chosen one form as standard, viz. Adhinam.

I have not toyed with any spellings found in quotations, though I do give an alternate transliteration in brackets in instances where a clarification seems necessary.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN NOTES

Epigraphical Sources

A.R.E.	Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy
S.I.I.	South Indian Inscriptions
E.I.	Epigraphica Indica
Pudukkottai	Chronological List of Inscriptions of the Pudukkottai State arranged according to Dynasties.

Legal Records

I.L.R.	Indian Law Review

Other Sources

HDhS	History of Dharmasastra

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INTRODUCTION

The Topic

Scattered throughout South India are religious centres known as matas (Skt. matha). The term has been rendered into English either as "monastery" or "seminary".[1] Neither of the terms is quite accurate, for both connote an institution comparable to a Western, Christian, monastery. Although a matam may share some of the characteristics of these types of institutions, it serves quite a different purpose in its Hindu setting.

The label matam may be applied to several types of religious centres in India, ranging from rest houses in pilgrimage centres[2] to large institutions that administer an extensive network of land

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[1] For example, Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 236. Most dictionaries cite these meanings, but also include the idea of the dwelling place of an ascetic. See Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary p. 774; Apte, A Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 417; Sircar, Epigraphical Glossary, p. 54. The Tamil-English dictionaries also add the idea of choultry and rest house: The Tamil Lexicon, vol. v., p. 3020; Winslow, A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary, p. 837. T.N. Subramanian, South Indian Temple Inscriptions, vol. III, Annexure, p. xxxvi, provides only the meaning, "place where pilgrims and religious mendicants and tapasvins are fed."

[2] For example, there is a list of matas and choultries under the heading of rest houses in A. Uthandaram, A Pilgrim's Guide to Rameswaram and Dhanushkadi (Ramesvaram: n.d.), pp. 45-47.

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endowments and house a fraternity of ascetics.[3] The internal organization of such institutions is often based on a teacher-disciple relationship whose tradition can be traced back several centuries, and whose lineage defines the authority that governs the institution.[4] Not all matas, however, are made up of members who are life-long celibates, or who are disciples of the head of the institution. In some centres, the members of the matam are linked through kinship ties, and succession rights within the institution are determined by normal familial-based inheritance rights, that is, the control of the institution passes from father to son.[5] In yet other matas, membership of the centre is based on familial ties, but succession is arranged through election.[6]

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[3] The best known of this type of institution are three centres located in the Tanjavur District of Tamilnadu. These centres are the Tiruvavatuturai Atinam, the Dharmapuram Atinam, and the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal. Their organizational structure is the focus of this thesis.

[4] The religious centres affiliated with the Sankaracarya are examples of this type of institution. These include the Kamakota Pitha of Kanchipuram and the Sringeri Matha. See William Cenkner, A Tradition of Teachers: Sankara and the Jagadgurus Today (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983). These centres are reputed to have been founded by Sankara, although several scholars, such as Karl Potter, "The myth of Sankara" in Journal of the American Academy of Religion, vol. 31, 1975, pp. 472-495, have recently begun to question this claim.

[5] See P.R. Ganapathy Iyer, The Law Relating to Hindu and Mohameddan Endowments, 2nd edition (Madras: Modern Printing Works, 1918), pp. 481 and 663-669.

[6] The Srirankanarayana jiyar matha of the Srirankam temple near Tiruchchirappalli apparently was once an example of an hereditary office, but today the office is held through election. The Koil Olugu. The Chronicle of the Srirankam Temple with Historical Notes, edited by V.N. Hari Rao (Madras: Rochouse and Sons Private, Ltd, n.d.) which describes the founding of the matha, suggests that its succession was first through election, rather than appointment or primogeniture. K.V. Raman in his Sri Varadararajaswami Temple - Kanchi (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1975), pp. 111-112, discusses the Jiyars of the Sri

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Underlying this seemingly diverse array of institutions all sharing the basic label of matam, is a common characteristic. All these centres serve, in one way or the other, to link a segment of the general population with the religious beliefs and practices associated with the temple tradition of Hinduism.[7] How each of these different types of matam establishes this connection, and how this connection benefits the groups of peoples concerned depends on the nature of the specific centre and the specific characteristics of the groups involved; these characteristics include sectarian beliefs, caste make-up, family allegiances, individual traditions, and so on. These connections may sound somewhat simplistic, but especially in the case of the larger

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Varadararajaswami temple in Kanchi. His discussion is somewhat confusing. He states, "The Jiyars were ascetics (sannyasis). Usually persons of sound knowledge of the scriptures and good character were selected for the Jiyar's position. They need not be necessarily celebates (sic), but persons leading a normal married life (grihastas) were also often chosen. But after the selection, they should renounce their household duties and other material comforts and take to the ascetic life, dedicating themselves to religious service. The Jiyars has their own mathas or monasteries, having a number of disciples who sought spiritual initiation and enlightenment."

[7] Here I draw a distinction between the philosophical traditions of India and the temple traditions. What I mean by temple tradition is the complement of devotion, ritual, festival, pilgrimage, and so on, that centres around the temple. Fred Clothey, Ritual and Intent (Madras: Blackie and Son Publishers Private Limited, 1983), discusses the present interest scholars are showing in temple and other ritual. Jayant Lele, "The Bhakti movement in India: A Critical Introduction", in Tradition and Modernity in Bhakti Movements (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), pp. 3-7 discusses the reasons that "devotinal Hinduism" was neglected until quite recently by Western scholars. On the sphere of activity of the temple complex in both urban and peasant society see Burton Stein, "The Economic Functions of a Medieval South Indian Temple" in The Journal of Asian Studies, vol. XIX, 1962, pp. 163-176, and Friedhelm Hardy, "Ideology and Cultural Contexts of the Srivaisnava Temple" in Indian Economic and Social History Review, vol. 14, no. 1 (January-March 1977), pp. 119-51.

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institutions, they often encapsulate a complex history of social relationships that extend beyond the religious sphere, and involve economic, political, and other factors.

This thesis proposes to identify some of these factors by exploring the social network of one set of associated matas in the Tanjavur District of Tamilnadu. The matas to be studied are the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, about midway between Kumbhakonam and Mayilatuturai, the Dharmapuram Adhinam, about two kilometres east of Mayilatuturai, and the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal, about twelve kilometres northeast of Kumbhakonam. I will also make reference to the Suriyanarkoil Adhinam, located in Suriyanarkoil, a village housing a rare temple to Suriya, built by the Cola king, Kulottunka I, about five kilometres northeast of Avatuturai. Its background is slightly different from that of the three centres I have just listed, but at present it shares some of their characteristics. All of these centres are relatively close to each other, and to the Kaveri River.[8]

These matas have been chosen for this study because they share a

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[8] The Kaveri River of the Tanjavur District of Tamilnad, India is an important feature in the religious history of South India. The sites of many of the deities praised by the Alvars and Nayanmars, the poet singers of the mid seventh to ninth centuries, are located in proximity to these riverbanks. For example, in the Tevaram of Tirunanacampantar, between 200 and 250 sites are places of attention. Of these, as many as 190 are located along the lower course of the Kaveri, with the distance between the sites averaging three to four miles. (C.V. Narayana Ayyar, Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India, Madras:1974, pp. 306-307.) These same sites were the focus of much of the later religious zeal of the Cola empire, zeal manifested not only in the constructions of stone temples, but also in the large endowments of devadana and brahmadeya lands. These endowments play an important role in the history of the matas.

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number of important characteristics. All of these centres date from the sixteenth century,[9] a relatively late date of origin, as there are temple inscriptions from the area dating as early as the ninth century that refer to matas.[10] Those earlier matas[11] have apparently not survived, for there are no present centres or matas that can be directly connected with them, whereas Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram, Tiruppanantal and Suriyanarkoil have each had a relatively unbroken history since the mid-sixteenth century, and are all still thriving centres.

This late date of origin, the fact that these centres are still living centres, and their geographical closeness to each other would merely be interesting facts were it not for three other features. These

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[9] The preceptor of the founder of the Dharmapuram line is referred to in an inscription (A.R.E. no. 104 of 1911) dated saka 1482 (1562-1563 A.D.), found on the southern base of a temple at Sikkil. As for Tiruvavatuturai, the earliest epigraphical record that refers to the present centre is fairly late, although there is a record of the founder of the present lineage that is dated at saka 1510 (A.R.E. no. 309 of 1913). There is also a fairly reliable tradition that refers to interaction between the founder of Tiruvavatuturai and Sivagrayogi of Suriyanarkoil. The date of Sivagrayogi is established by reference to Acyutaraya Nayaka (A.D. 1572) in the Saivasannyasapaddhati.

[10] See, for example, A.R.E. no. 235 of 1907, from Tiruvitaimarutur.

[11] Several matas are mentioned in inscriptions found at Tiruvavatuturai. These include the Sarvadevan matam (A.R.E. no. 103 of 1925, dated 28th year of Rajendra Cola), the Tirunilavitankan matam (144 of 1925, dated the 31st year of Kulottunka Cola) the Sivalokanayakan matam (148 of 1925, dated the 47th year of Kulottunka Cola), and others. The present atinam makes no attempt to connect itself with these earlier centres. There are many other matas mentioned in the inscriptions. Some of these centres were apparently linked together. One of the most common is the bhiksa matam or golaki matam, which appears in records that span a few centuries. See Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society, vol. VI, pp. 158-164. A.R.E. nos. 352 of 1912 and 178 of 1935-1936 are examples of inscriptions that refer to the golaki or bhiksa matam.

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features pertain to the sociological profile of those who are associated with the institutions. One relates to sectarian affiliations: these matas are centres of Saiva Siddhanta, a religious movement that has been dated to the thirteenth century,[12] and thus many who have been associated with these matas have also been associated with this movement.

The second pertains to caste: at present, only members of four groupings of the velala caste and one of the cettiyar are eligible to be initiated into the spiritual line of each of the matas,[13] although members of other castes sometimes have informal associations with them.

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12 This century sees the date of Meykantar, who is said to have produced a Tamil text of twelve enigmatic verses, known as the Civananapotam. There are extant a Tamil and a Sanskrit version of the text, and there is some controversy over whether the text was originally compiled in Tamil, or was a translation of twelve sutras taken from the Rauravagama. Certain earlier commentators on it and on Arulnanti's Civananacittiyar, such as Sivagra Yogi (16th century) and Civananamunivar (18th century), acknowledged the precedence of the Sanskrit version. However, when N.R. Bhatt compiled a critical edition of the Raurava Agama in 1961 (Pondichery: Publications de l'Institut francais d'Indologie, no. 18, vol. I.), and when Jean Filliozat drew attention to the fact that these twelve sutras were not to be found in any of the manuscripts utilized ("Agama civaites", vol. I, 1961, p. xiv), the issue was reopened. The text is revered by anyone who considers himself or herself to be a saivasiddhantin, although it is neither the earliest nor the most extensive of the fourteen works recognized by the tradition as canonical. Meykantar's date has been accepted as the thirteenth century on the basis of an inscription (A.R.E. no. 485 of 1902) found at Tiruvannamalai, dated to 1232 A.D., that refers to an image set up by Meykantar of Tiruvennainallur.

13 These five groups are the pillais, tondaimandala mutaliyars, karkattar pillais, tecikars, and the caiva cettiyars. More will be said about these caste groupings in Chapter Two.

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Velala leadership has been a hallmark of these centres;[14] as well, it has been a feature of the Saiva Siddhanta tradition.[15]

The third pertains to wealth. Though the members of these centres are celibate ascetics, they control, through their institutions, vast wealth in land, immovable property, investments and so on. Much of this wealth is related to the centres' administration of

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[14] Throughout his account of Tiruvavatuturai, for example, T. C. Minatcicuntarampillai, Aracavanattu aranilaiyam (Tiruvavatuturai:1962) places emphasis on the good velala background of the heads of the institution. As well, Tamil scholars who were of velala background were closely associated with the centres, often as members of the institution. One example is the eighteenth century Civananamunivar, whose works have perpetuated the Saiva Siddhanta scholastic tradition. The association of Saiva Siddhanta and caste membership is closely tied to the history of the centres in Tanjavur--and to how these centres defined their own history.

[15] There is a strong feeling in South India that to be a Saiva Siddhanta is to be a velala. T.N. Ramachandran, who is not a velala, alludes to this sentiment when he explains his attachment to the Saiva Siddhanta tradition, that resulted from a reading of a recent philosophical treatise on Saiva Siddhanta: "We bow before the [work], his magnum opus which established us (a Sankara Vedanti by birth) in Saiva Siddhantam irrevocably." (T.N. Ramachandra, Saiva Siddhantam. An Explication and Assessment by Scholars the World Over, Tanjavur: The Dharmapuram Adhinam, 1984, p. 197). Many of the most militant Saiva Siddhantins consider their tradition to have been born out of a strictly Tamil milieu. This equation of Saiva Siddhanta with pure Tamil culture reflects a nationalistic movement that had its origins in the late nineteenth century and and had rather blatant anti-Brahmin undertones. It was carried over to the present by such writings as Velir varalaru [History of the velala], 1886; Swami Vedachalam, [Maraimalai Adikal], Velalar nakarikam [The Civliization of the Ancient Vellalas], (Pallavaram: T.M. Press, 1927); M. Arokiaswami, "The Origin of the Vellalas" Journal of Indian History, XXXIII (1955). The Saiva Siddhantins who were affected by this movement thus define their tradition as non-Brahminical from the outset, notwithstanding the fact that seven, and possibly eight of the fourteen works recognized as canonical, are attributed to Umapati, a diksitar brahmin of Citamparam. Whether Umapati in fact authored all of these works and whether this Umapati is the same as the Umapati who produced several Sanskrit works including the Pauskara Vrtti and the Sataratnasangraha is still under debate.

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a network of temples in South India. Appendix A lists the temples and temple endowments controlled by Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram. Their present role as temple overlords stems from a decision made by the British colonial government in 1863 to return the control and administration of religious institutions to Indian hands; however, these centres were involved in temple administration long before the British arrived in India. Some involvement in local temple affairs is not unusual for a matam; the extent of these centres' involvement is. Likewise, the connection between a matam and a sectarian movement is by no means unique to these centres,[16] but certain scholars, notably Burton Stein, have been tempted to see it as quite significant.[17] How significant it was, in light of other factors, is an issue this work will address.

This thesis, thus, will attempt to explore the circumstances that contributed to the development of the velala-led centres into the type of institutions they now are. The discussion will approach the material thematically, for, as will become clearer shortly, the problem

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[16] Most of the prominent caste groupings in South India are aligned with a network of matas. The most well-known are the lingayats, whose relations with caste have been explored in the work of R. Blake Michael, "The Foundation Myths of Two Denominations of Virasaivism: Viraktas and Gurusthalins", Journal of Asian Studies, vol. 42, no. 2, (February 1983), pp. 309-22, and the smarta brahmins who have close associations with the Sankara matas, but there are many other groups, such as the saurastra brahmins, reddiars, kasukara cettiyars, visvakarma artisans, and so on, that patronize their own matas or religious institutions.

[17] Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society, pp. 230ff. Stein bases most of his discussion on Rajamanickam, pp. 232-237, and 379f. He also takes his information from A.R.E. 1909, para. 53, pp. 103-105.

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in understanding the history and development of these centres is as much a problem of definition as anything else. The themes of lineage, locality, caste and gifting that we take up in the chapters that follow will help define what these centres do - and have done - and thus help elucidate their development. These themes help explain how these centres happened to assume the forms they did. In places throughout the thesis, attention will be paid to material that predates the actual centres as it is in this earlier material that we see the sources that contributed to the development of the present velala centres.

This work will treat the three centres, the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, the Dharmapuram Adhinam, and the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal, and their related outposts as one class of institutions, in distinction to institutions of other affiliations, such as the Sankaracarya centres, one of which is located in the city of Kumbhakonan,[18] also in the Tanjavur District. Notwithstanding the fact that each of the centres has its own unique tradition and preserves its own history, and that there has been in certain times of their shared history considerable rivalry among them, these three centres share an interrelated social context; to isolate one of the centres from the others is to ignore this shared context. The focus of this thesis is not the reconstruction of one particular centre's history, but rather, the reconstruction of what the emergence of such centres meant in terms of the social and religious

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[18] For insight into some of the controversies that surround this and other Sankara centres, see R. Krishnaswami Aiyer and K.B. Venkataram, The Truth about Kumbhakonam Mutt (Madurai: Sri Ramakrishna Press, 1977).

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history of South India.

Apart from the centres' own house publications,[19] and a small handful of scholarly articles,[20] very little has been written about these institutions. For that reason, I am going to provide a somewhat lengthy description of each of the institutions, as well as some general remarks about their workings and traditions. These remarks should shed some light on the complex social network in which the matas work. I will then conclude this introduction with a discussion of methodology, sources, and organization of material. From there, I will begin

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[19] The centres themselves have published articles about their history, such as Ira Celvakkanapati, "Tarumai Atina Kuruparamparai Varalaru" in Anaittulaka Caiva Cittanta Mutal Karuttarankam Vila Malar (Dharmapuram: Dharmapuram Atinam, 1984) pp. 100-138; To. Mu. Paskarattontaiman, "Atinak Koyilkalin Atci" in Tarumai Kanakapikseka Vila Malar (Dharmapuram: Dharmapuram Atinam, 1961), pp. 231-235; Ta. Ce. Minatcicuntirampillai, Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam (Tiruvavatuturai: Tiruvavatuturai Atinam, 1962), and others. These works focus on their preceptors' accomplishments and the contributions the centres have made to Tamil scholarship.

[20] K. Nambi Aroonan has published a descriptive article, "Three Saivite Mutts in Tanjvur" in Changing South Asia: Religion and Society, vol. I, edited by K. Ballhatchet and David Taylor (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1981); G.A. Oddie has looked at the centres' activities in the nineteenth century, "The Character, Role and Significance of Non-Brahmin Saivite Maths in Tanjore District in the Nineteenth Century" in ibid, pp. 37-50. David Washbrooke, The Emergence of Provincial Politics. The Madras Presidency. 1870-1920 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976.) refers to these matas in the context of provincial politics. Glenn Yocum has done three works dealing with Tiruvavatuturai and one of the temples it administers: "A Non-Brahmin Tamil Saiva Mutt: A Field Study of the Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam", a paper delivered at a conference on "Monastic Life in the Christian and Hindu Traditions: A Comparative Study", at the University of Florida, February 16-19, 1985; "Wisdom Made Visible: The Divine Teacher in Tamil Saiva Temple and Monastic Ritual", a paper presented at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, 1987; and "Brahmin, King, Sannyasi, and Goddess in a Cage: Reflections on the 'Conceptual Order of Hinduism' at a Tamil Saiva Temple" in Contributions to Indian Sociology, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 15-39.

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Chapter One with a look at the centres' definitions of themselves.

Adhinam

The term adhinam (Tamil: atinam) figures in the name of the institutions at Suriyanarkoil, Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram, and a few other centres not discussed in this thesis.[21] As far as I know, this term is applied only to non-Brahmin Saiva centres in South India, and even then not to all of the non-Brahmin centres. Though related, the two terms, matam and atinam, are not interchangeable. In Tamil usage, matam carries a connotation of place,[22] though, as indicated above, the term matam is often used as an umbrella term for a wide range of religious centres and resthouses. In contrast, the term atinam designates an independent institution that has its own internal structure of authority. An atinam also typically exercises some type of corporate authority over smaller, related centres. In casual conversation any of the centres at Dharmapuram, Tiruvavatuturai or Suriyanarkoil might be referred to as a matam, especially with regards

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[21] In both Madurai and Kunrakkuti there are centres similar in make-up to the Tanjavur centres. The centre in Maduari is called the Tirunanacampantar Adhinam; the one in Kunrakkuti is the Tiruvannamalai Adhinam.

[22] People associated with any of the centres tend to refer to the central building of the institution - the building in which all of the activities of the centre take place - as the matam, as in the question, "Are you going to the matam?", whereas they are very careful to refer to the institution as the atinam. They are also very particular to preserve the distinction between an atinam and a matam. For example, should one mistakenly refer to the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal as an atinam, one is very quickly informed of the the subordinate status of the Tiruppanantal centre to the Dharmapuram Adhinam.

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to the site, the land and the buildings occupied by the centre. It would, however, be unthinkable to refer to the outpost of Dharmapuram at the Citamparam temple as an atinam. That outpost is a matam under the management of the Dharmapuram Adhinam. In other words, every atinam can be designated by the term matam, but not every matam can be called an atinam, as very few matas house an atinam.

In a rare attempt to define the term atinam, F.R. Hemmingway, the British District Officer in the Tanjavur District, believed the term to designate "central mutts [matas] exercising control and supervision over subordinate mutts and other institutions such as temples."[23] The term atinam suggests "property" and is possibly derived from a centre's association with property through its administration of temple endowments. The term appears in conjunction with centres in the Tanjavur District only in the eighteenth century,[24] nearly a century and a half after they were founded, and after the Mahrattas had taken control of the area. By the mid-eighteenth century the term atinam

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[23] Madras District Gazetteers: Tanjore (Madras: 1906), p. 232.

[24] The earliest epigraphical evidence pertaining to the Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram atinams refers to them as matas. There is the summary of a copper-plate grant dated Saka 1597 (1675-6 A.D.) to the matam of Dharmapuram by Chennamaji, wife of Somasekhara Nayaka in Robert Sewell, List of Inscriptions. A Sketch of Dynasties of South India (Madras:1884), p. 105, no. 16. This reference is the earliest yet located that identifies Dharmapuram. In the Tirukuttalam Plates of Sivala Varagunarama alias Pandya Kulasekharadeva Dikshitar. Saka 1670, (Travancore Archaeological Series, vol. 1, no. XVI and XVII, a sayarakashai kattalai is endowed to the Tiruvavatuturai matam. Some grants (recorded on the copper-plates in possession of these centres) are given in the name of the head of the institution whose title only indicates the location of the centre.

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replaces matam in copperplate grants to several of these centres;[25] this term most likely reflects a broadening of the social roles assumed by these centres.

Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam

Tiruvavatuturai is a small village situated near a branch of the Kaveri River about midway between Kumbhakonan and Mayilatuturai. An archway erected about twenty years ago marks the entrance to the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam from the road connecting these two towns, though the settlement at Tiruvavatuturai, the temple complex, and the matam are several kilometres to the south of this highway. Tiruvavatuturai is also accessible by train. The Narasingapettai station is within walking distance, but with the numerous buses travelling between Kumbakonam and Mayilatuturai, few approach the site by train these days.

At one time most who came to Tiruvavatuturai travelled on foot. Tiruvavatuturai houses the thirty-sixth shrine,[26] or traditional

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[25] The origin of the usage of atinam appears to date to the early years of the eighteenth century. In a copper-plate grant of Tiruvavatuturai dated 1711-1712, the endowment is made to the Tiruvavatuturai matam. In a copper-plate dated 1732-1733, the endowment is to the pantaram (head) of the Tiruvavatuturai atinam. These copper-plate grants have not been published. Pulavar Ce. Iracu of the Department of Epigraphy, Tamil University of Tanjavur generously provided me with transcripts of the copper-plates.

[26] V.A. Ayyar, Origin and History of Saivism in South India, p. 231.

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pilgrimage point, along the Kaveri River in the "sacred geography"[27] of Tamil Saivites. This geography is marked out by the songs of the celebrated nayanmar, the Saiva poet saints or hymnsingers of the seventh to ninth centuries who travelled through South India singing the praises of the deity and the temples sacred to him.[28] Though the nayanmar devotions cover an area stretching from Tirupati, through South India, into northern Sri Lanka, the bulk of the hymns are concentrated on a cluster of sites in the Kaveri delta, with the majority located within the Tanjavur District.[29] In part because of their close association with the nayanmar, the temples in this area, which include such places as Citamparam, Tiruvitaimarutur, Tiruvaiyaru, Sirkali, and Tiruvarur, have traditionally been important cultural centres for South Indian Saivites. As George Spencer points out, "the historical association of one or more of the saints with a particular temple constitutes a significant segment of the institution's collective vision of its own past."[30]

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[27] George Spencer, "The Sacred Geography of the Tamil Shaivite Hymns" in Numen, vol. 17, 1970, pp. 232-44; see also Indira V. Peterson, "Singing of a Place: Pilgrimage as Metaphor and Motif in the Tevaram Songs of the Tamil Saivite Saints", in Journal of the American Oriental Society vol. 102, no. 1 (January-March 1982), pp. 69-90.

[28] On the origin and development of the Tamil Saivite sect, see M.A. Dorai Rangaswamy, The Religion and Philosophy of the Tevaram: With Special Reference to Nampi Arur (Sundarar) (Madras: Madras University Press, 1958), vol. I, pp. 1-35, and Kamil Zvelebil, The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), pp. 184-99.

[29] G. Spencer, "The Sacred Geography", pp. 236-39.

[30] Ibid., p. 240.

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This cultural importance has been matched both by economic and political importance. The Kaveri basin includes some of the most fertile land in South India; it was one of the earliest regions of agricultural settlement and even today is one of the most densely populated areas.[31] From the ninth to twelfth centuries, the region was the power base of the Colas, who dominated much of the rest of South India. Though the debate about the nature of the Cola state has not been settled,[32] and indeed is beyond the scope of this work, their association with the Kaveri delta is indisputable. Two other ruling groups from later periods of South Indian history, the nayaks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Mahrattas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were also located in Tanjavur.

Tiruvavatuturai is in the middle of this area. The shrine of Macilamani, the main Siva temple in Tiruvavatuturai, was one of the nayanmar stops. Nanacampantar, Tirunavukkaraccar (Appar), Cuntaram, and Manikkavacakar all composed songs at this temple and the site's chronicle (talapuranam), the eighteenth century Turaicaippuranam of Tiruvavatuturai Cattiram Caminatamunivar,[33] recounts the possibly apocryphal adventures of several other of the lesser known nayanmar at

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[31] Ibid., p. 236.

[32] See Noboru Karashima, South Indian History and Society. Studies from Inscriptions A.D. 850 to 1800 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 3-4, for comments on Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, and L. Champalaksmi, "Peasant Society and State in South India: A Review" in Journal of Indian Economic and Social History Review, vol. 39, pp.79-84.

[33] Cattiram Caminatamunivar, Turaicaippuranam, prose edition by Nanananta (Tiruvavatuturai: 1961).

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Tiruvavatuturai. The site also houses a number of tomb-shrines (camati, Skt. samadhi) of Saiva saints and mystics. The bulk of these shrines are of ascetics connected with the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, but a couple pre-date the founding of this institution. One, located within the temple complex, is the camati of Tirumular, the seventh century mystic whose Tirumantiram is the fifth book of the Tirumurai, the Tamil Saivite canon.[34] Another is the tomb of Tirumalikkaitevar, an eleventh century cittar or mystic, whose four songs make up the first section of the Tiruvicaippa, part of the ninth book of the Tirumurai.[35] His camati is smack in the middle of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, just a couple of metres away from the camati of the Sri Namaccivaya, the founder of the present institution. More will be said about Tirumalikkaitevar in a following chapter. An alternate name of Tiruvavatuturai is navakoticittarpuram,[36] the abode of nine hundred thousand mystics.

The matam is just to the south of the temple. The two institutions appear as one complex, for the matam is attached directly to the temple and its enclosing walls merge right into the temple's

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[34] For an introduction to Tirumular, see K. Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, p. 138.

[35] See ibid., p. 148, for an introdction to Tirumalikaittevar. The location of his camati at Tiruvavatuturai is apparently unknown to Zvelebil.

[36] anon., A Short History of the Tiruvavaduturai Adheenam (Tiruvavatuturai: n.d.), p. 2. This name appears in some of the copper-plate grants to Tiruvavatuturai, as in a grant from 1711 which records that a group of cultivators have gathered at the place of "nine crore cittars" to pledge an amount from their service tenure to go towards gurupuja at Tiruvavatuturai.

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outer walls. The physical contiguity is matched by administrative powers; the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam is the trustee of the temple, and oversees its various activities. A walkway leads from the temple complex into the centre of the matam. One could enter the temple through its eastern gateway and then veer off to the left and head straight into the matam. The centre's other public entrance opens to the south, the side that faces the Kaveri River.

The complex housing the matam is very large. The central feature of the matam is the camati of Namaccivaya, who lived in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Prior to his arrival at Tiruvavatuturai, he had some connection with the famous temple city of Citamparam.[37] His camati is flanked by Tirumalikkaitevar's shrine; behind the two shrines is the chamber known as otukkam the hall where the head of the institution Sri-la-Sri Civapirakacam Tecikar Pantara Canniti, otherwise known as kurumakacannitanam, the sacred presence of the guru, alternately conducts the atinam's business or sits in meditation. To the north of otukkam, and still behind the camati shrines, is a cell where the tutelary deities of the centre's spiritual lineage are kept. These include the personal linga of Namaccivaya, a linga that belonged to Umapati, a fourteenth century preceptor in the early Saiva Siddhanta tradition, and the personal linga of the present kurumakacannitanam.[38] The head of the institution is responsible for

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[37] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 225. This connection will be discussed in Part Two.

[38] This information comes from Tiruvavatuturai's kurumakacannitam. It also appears in Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 224.

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ensuring the performance of a daily cycle of worship to these deities, about which more will be said below. The other room that has great ritual significance is the feeding hall to the south of the camati shrines. This is a large open hall, where, during festive days, a rite of mahesvarapuja, or an honouring (i.e. feeding) of the faithful, takes place with kurumakacannitanam presiding. The matam's two kitchens, one for kurumakacannitanam and one for the staff, are adjacent to this hall. The granary is to the north of Tirumalikaittevar's shrine.

The rest of the matam is used for some of the more worldly activities of the centre. To the south of otukkam, past the room where visitors wait for an interview with kurumakacannitanam and past the courtyard where one of the matam's wells is located, is a stairway leading to a second floor. There, above the ritual activities that take place on ground level, are the offices for the centre's manager, who is in the employment of kurumakacannitanam, the centre's treasurer, and the desks of its numerous accountants. They are responsible for keeping track of the Adhinam's properties and endowments. In addition to the area around Tiruvavatuturai, the centre owns an estimated 35,000 hectares of wet and dry lands outright, and administers another 25,000 hectares through endowments.[39] The endowments are related to the sixteen temples and thirteen rights by appointment to oversee temple rituals (kattalai) that are under Tiruvavatuturai's control. I list

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[39] These estimates are the standard quotation given to outsiders who ask. K. Nambi Aroonan, "Three Saivite Mutts in Tanajvur", p. 25, gives the same figures. The centres are extremely reluctant to let outsiders have access to their books.

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these kattalai in Appendix A.

As noted above, the centre's direct management of temples relates to administrative decisions made by the British colonial government, but its role as kattalai, or endowment manager evolved long before the nineteenth century. This role of endowment manager is part of the Adhinam's history and relates to the complex ritual transactions so central to the temple complex. I discuss some of symbolic language of gifting in Part Three.

In addition to land, the centre also owns other properties, such as a large cinema complex in Madurai; many of these properties were obtained in recent years for investment purposes. Certainly important to the centre's maintenance nowadays, this type of investment pertains more to shrewd management of resources[40] than to a particular role assigned to -- or assumed by -- this religious institution in South Indian society. For that reason, less attention will be paid to the centre's overall wealth than to the social and religous network in which it operates. As a result of its role as landlord and temple overlord, Tiruvavatuturai is connected to a large network of people, ranging from the ryots whose livelihood comes from cultivating endowed lands, to the temple priests at temples under its control, to royal figures who have in the past appointed Tiruvavatuturai as endowment manager.

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[40] See David Ludden, "Agrarian Organization in Tinnevelly District: 800 to 1900 A.D." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1978, pp. 117-19 for a discussion of investments as they relate to revenue received through temple endowments. The Indian Law Review 10 Madras, 1875, pp. 387ff. describes examples of investments that were made in previous centuries by the head of the matam at Tiruppanantal.

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On the main floor of the matam, to the east of the camati shrines is an open public hall. Both the entrance from the temple and the south entrance lead into this hall. To the east of it, that is, in the direction leading away from the camatis, is a large garden area. The flagpole of the matam stands at this entrance, or due east of Namaccivaya's camati. Several smaller buildings ring the garden area. These include a printing press established in 1954, a nursery school and the matam's library, the Sarasvati Mahal, which houses some 473 palm-leaf manuscripts in Sanskrit, 231 manuscripts in Tamil and perhaps ten thousand books in Sanskrit, Tamil, English and a few other languages.[41]

The large residence of kurumakacannitanam is at the other end of the complex, or to the west of the camatis. There is a private entrance through the courtyard adjacent to otukkam that kurumakacannitanam uses to enter the matam. Beyond kurumakacannitanam's residence is the newly constructed Meykantar Mantapam, named in honour of the thirteenth century child prodigy who is credited with composing the Civananapotam, the seminal work of Saiva Siddhanta. On festive occasions the centre invites scholars, musicians, and traditional dancers to enlighten and entertain those who gather at the matam.

The centre owns the houses on the four streets that surround the temple complex and matam. The centre's staff live mainly in houses on the south street, though some also live on the north and west streets.

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[41] These numbers come from a listing compiled by Prof. S. Nagarajan of the Tamil University.

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Not all the staff live on site; the general manager, a smarta brahmin, one of the librarians, also a brahmin, and several others, commute daily from places like Swamimalai and Tiruvitaimarudur. Tiruvavatuturai has just recently begun a Saiva Siddhanta correspondence course. A house on the south street, just opposite the matam, is used by the correspondence course director when he comes to Tiruvavatuturai from Trichy.[42]

To the north of the Siva temple is an enclosed ground that houses the camatis of Tiruvavatuturai's previous heads. One passes this cluster of small shrines when coming to Tiruvavatuturai from the highway linking Mayuram and Kumbhakonan. In accordance with the Saiva practices of the centre, the initiated members of Tiruvavatuturai's order are not cremated; rather when they attain the "fullness of Siva" (civaparipuranam, i.e., death), their forms, or bodies, are interred. For a head of the lineage, a temple is built over the place of internment at which a member of the lineage conducts a daily cycle of worship (pucai, Skt. puja). Of the twenty-three lineage preceptors to date, the camatis of sixteen, including that of Namaccivaya in the centre of the matam, are located at Tiruvavatuturai; the rest attained the "fullness of Siva" while staying at temples associated with this centre. Two are interred at sites near-by in the Tanjavur District, one at Avudaiyarkoil, in the Ramnad District, and one at Suchindram, in Kerala. The present kurumakacannitanam must ensure the execution of

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[42] In 1984, Mr. Ati Murkavel was in charge of the Saiva Siddhanta Correspondence course.

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daily puja at all of these sites.

The camatis of the ordinary members of the lineage are located in an open area further west. Most of these sites are marked only with a small mound of dirt. A few have more elaborate temple structures erected over them; these are the camatis of some of the luminaries of the centre. Several of the great Tamil scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were affiliated with this centre. The camati of the eighteenth century Civananamunivar is in this area.

The rest of the area surrounding the temple and matam is typical of any South Indian village. There are paddy fields, banana gardens, coconut groves, tanks, and so on, all owned by the Adhinam. The village of Tiruvavatuturai, to the northeast of the temple, is a mixed settlement of Hindus and Muslims. The house sites in the village are also owned by the centre.

The present kurumakacannitanam of Tiruvavatuturai is in his mid-thirties and joined the Adhinam relatively recently. He came to Tiruvavatuturai in 1982 and asked the then head of the centre to accept him as a disciple.[43] In due course he was given the successive rites of initiation, which will be discussed in some detail below, that admit an individual as a member of the Adhinam. Within nine months of his arrival at Tiruvavatuturai, he was designated by the then kurumakacannitanam as his successor. A few months later in May of 1983, he became head of the Adhinam at the death of his predecessor.

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[43] I recount the circumstances of his arrival at Tiruvavatuturai in more detail in Chapter Two.

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Nomination of successor by the head of the centre is standard usage at all of the non-Brahmin matas in the Tanjavur district, but this particular succession caused some outcry because the present kurumakacannitanam by-passed many of the older and senior members of the small group of initiated ascetics who make up Tiruvavatuturai's order. However, scandal relating to succession is not all that unusual at any of these centres as numerous news reports from this and last century indicate.[44]

There are approximately sixteen initiated disciples (tampiran) belonging to the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam.[45] When the present kurumakacannitanam assumed leadership of the institution, these tampiran automatically became his disciples, even though almost all of them had been senior to him during his first months with the institution. This re-ordering of rank is no mere quirk of bureaucracy, but rather reflects the rule of succession within the lineage. Succession is based on the logic of titca (Skt. diksa), the rites of initiation, and what is understood to occur when a tampiran is administered acariya apitekam (Skt. acarya abhisekam), the rite that qualifies an initiate to be a preceptor. The rites of initiation and their ritual logic will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[44] Chapter One presents some of this material.

[45] Though, as we will see below, membership in the lineage that makes up the institution at Tiruvavatuturai is not fluid, membership numbers of tampiran belonging to the institution does fluctuate. Occasionally tampiran suffer crises of identity and disappear, sometimes temporarily, sometimes permanently, from the institution. The present kurumakacannitanam estimated that there were sixteen tampiran.

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On any given day there are only one or two of the initiated ascetics to be found at Tiruvavatuturai. One is resident at Tiruvavatuturai and has a room just off the south entrance to the matam. He usually undertakes puja at Namaccivaya's camati mornings and evenings and also ensures that puja is conducted at the camati shrines to the north of the Siva temple. He thus has major ritual responsibilities, which increase when kurumakacannitanam is out of station. In terms of his ritual functions, he appears as second-in-command at the institution. As of 1986, however, he had not been formally designated as the lineage heir, that is, he had not been administered acarya abhisekam, though kurumakacannitanam had given him the rite of initiation to qualify him to undertake the performance of puja at Namaccivaya's camati.

The rest of Tiruvavatuturai's ascetics do not actually live in the main centre at Tiruvavatuturai, but in matas (i.e., ascetics' residences/resthouses) at temples where the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam serves as the temple's hereditary trustee, or where it administers endowments. In other words, there is no community of monks to be found at Tiruvavatuturai, though there is a small brotherhood of initiated ascetics who are connected to this institution, but stationed elsewhere in South India, at temples in the Tirunelveli and Ramnad Districts, as well as in the Tanjavur District where the institution has interests. At these sites they represent their mother institution and look after its interests. The ascetic's role as kattalai tampiran (an initiated member of an ascetic order who oversees the administration of a temple

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endowment) is not new to Tiruvavatuturai. Literary sources and inscriptional material dating as far back as the seventeenth century use such titles,[46] and there are earlier inscriptions referring to ascetics participating in temple management. This material will be discussed in the chapters which follow.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Tiruvavatuturai also has a lay following. There is a network of Saiva velala families who live mainly in the the Tirunelveli District and who have had a hereditary affiliation with this centre. This community traditionally supports and patronizes the centre as Tiruvavatuturai's kurumakacannitanam is nominally their guru. Members of these families may seek Saiva initiation from him, though today very few have. Also, the initiated ascetic members of Tiruvavatuturai traditionally come from this pool of Saiva velala families that have patronized this centre. The especially devout Saiva families (a commitment to the Saiva tradition usually entails involvement with the Saiva matas) are honoured with invitations to the important ritual events of this centre, such as the annual gurupuja celebration, which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Nine. The extent to which any of the Saiva centres are actually - as opposed to nominally - supported depends largely on the degree to which the head

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[46] For examples of these kattalais, see Travancore Archaeological Series, vol. 1, nos. XVI and XVII, which discuss the Tirukuttalam Plates of Sivala Varagunarama alias Pandya Kulasekharadeva Dikshitar, saka 1670, in which a sayarakashai kattalai is endowed to the Tiruvavatuturai matam; a grant in Puluvar Iracu, Tancai Marattiyar Ceppetukal - 50 (no. 6, pp. 44-54), records the relationship between representatives of the non-Brahmin centres and a group of retti cultivators concerning their involvement in the maintenance of temple rituals in the Vaittiyanatacuvami temple (Vaithisvarakoil).

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of the institution has fulfilled his role as kurumakacannitanam.

Dharmapuram Adhinam

Dharmapuram is a small settlement six kilometres east of Mayilatuturai, and about thirty kilometres south of Citamparam. Like Tiruvavatuturai, it is located near a branch of the Kaveri river. In fact, some of the buildings in the Adhinam's complex are located within a few hundred metres of the south bank of the river. Unlike Tiruvavatuturai, however, Dharmapuram does not have legendary importance as a pilgrimage centre. To the best of my knowledge, very few if any nayanmar sang at Dharmapuram, and its appeal as a temple site is certainly eclipsed by other near-by centres, such as Sirkali[47] and Vaitisvarankoil, both of which are now under Dharmapuram's administration. There is also no evidence of important matas on this site prior to the time of Kurunanacampantar, Dharmapuram's founder, although the hagiographic accounts of his life do refer to some anonymous rsis who welcomed the arrival of Kurunanacampantar so they could be relieved of the burden of administering the Dharmapurisvara

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47 Sirkali is where the nayanar, Tirunanacampantar is said to have received God's grace when he was a three-year old child. He was left momentarily by his father on the steps to the temple tank, where he began weeping, calling out for his mother. Devi, accompanied by Siva appeared in the sky before him, and Devi fed him milk from her own breasts. So initiated, Tirunanacampantar went on to a career of hymnsinging.

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temple.[48]

At Dharmapuram, the Adhinam covers an area about two hectares in size. This area is marked by a surrounding wall that has several archways opening into the compound. Though most people approach the centre through the southern archway, which is just off the main highway leading into Mayilatuturai, the main entrance faces east. Those who come to the centre for formal or ceremonial purposes circumambulate the compound to enter through the eastern entrance.

Within the compound are the buildings, temples, camati shrines, clinic, schools, colleges, co-operative store, stables, residences, gardens, and the four surrounding or "car" streets, that make up the complex. At the heart of this complex is the matam. This building houses the shrine of Dharmapuram's tutelary deity, Cokkanata, who was the personal deity of Kurunanacampantar. Kurunanacampantar was a sixteenth century karkatta velala ascetic who originally came from Pandya country in what is now the Ramnad District in Tamilnadu. He was initiated by Nanaprakacar at Tiruvarur, whom he had sought out as a

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[48] Mu. Arunachalam, Guru Jnana Sambandhar of Dharmapuram (Dharmapuram: 1971), p. 61, writes, "As times went on, the sages who were looking after the Dharmapurisvara temple there and performing its various pujas, before the arrival of Jnanasambandhar, understood his spiritual eminence. They came to him, taught him many esoteric sciences ... and handed over to him for possession and administration the Dharmapurisvara temple, and their various hermitages. 'Oh Great One, May you live here long, and may you and your descendents administer the temple and its properties to the best advantage of the Saiva peoples.' Thus blessing him, they left the place."

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preceptor.[49] His initiation by Nanaprakacar imparted to him knowledge of Saiva rituals and so enabled him to conduct the worship of Cokkanata, whose linga image he had miraculously received in Madura. Once he demonstrated his spiritual qualifications, he was sent by Nanaprakacar to Dharmapuram where he installed Cokkanata in a matam, gathered disciples and apparently played some role in the affairs of the Dharmpurisvara temple.[50]

As at Tiruvavatuturai, a daily cycle of puja to the founder's personal linga image is the centre's essential rite. The chamber where Dharmapuram's kurumakacannitanam conducts the daily rites opens onto a large hall accessible to anyone who enters the matam. All visitors to the Adhinam pass though a pillared hallway when seeking an audience with kurumakacannitanam. The puja mantapa is to the right of this pillared hallway, thus visitors to the centre must pass by Cokkanata as they seek audience with Dharmapuram's kurumakacannitanam.

Opposite to the pujamantapa, on the otherside of the pillared hallway are the centre's three kitchens and the hall for mahesvarpuja, the hall used for feeding the followers of the centre. At the end of the pillared hallway is a hall where picture images of the centre's previous heads are displayed. This hall also serves as a reception

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[49] I will recount the story of Kurunanacampantar's initiation below in Chapter Two. Kamalainanaprakacar, the preceptor of Kurunanacampantar, is the well known literary figure who produced numerous works such as the Anuttana akaval, Civanantapotam. See K. Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, pp. 203-204.

[50] His preceptor, Kamalainanaprakacar, is mentioned in a role of temple administration in an inscription located at Sikkil (A.R.E. no. 104 of 1911)

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area, as adjacent to it is otukkam, kurumakacannitanam's office and guru pitam, (lineage seat), where Dharmapuram's head will see or be seen by only the most important or most persistant visitors to the centre. At Dharmapuram, the entrance to otukkam is watched over by a guard armed with a sabre. The right to armed guard was given by royal decree during the eighteenth century, the time of Mahratta rule in Tanjavur.

The administrative offices of the centre lie beyond the reception area and otukkam. Like Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram is also a landlord and temple overlord. It oversees the administration of three kattalais and the management of twenty-four temples, in addition to the three temples at Dharmapuram. These are listed in Appendix A. All of these temples and kattalais are relatively close to Dharmapuram, in contrast with the larger geographical separation between Tiruvavatuturai and some of the temples it oversees.

The Adhinam surrounds the temple complex at Dharmapuram, as many of its outlying buildings have over the years been built up around the temple. The matam, or central building of the institution, is to the south of the temple complex. The temple complex is made up of three temples clustered closely together, the Sri Jnanapurisvara temple, which houses the tomb of Dharmapuram's founder, the Dharmapurisvara temple, and the recently built Mahalaksmi temple, built about twenty-five years ago by the predecessor of Dharmapuram's present head. A temple priest (civacariya, Skt. sivacarya) conducts the pujas at the Jnanapurisvara temple, as at the other two temples in this complex. It is rather unusual for a sivacarya to conduct the rites at what is, according to

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the tradition of the Adhinam, the camati of a velala. For example, it would be unthinkable for a temple priest to undertake the puja at the camati of Namaccivaya at Tiruvavatuturai, though a sivacarya does do the puja at Tirumalikaittevar's shrine in the same matam.[51] A story connected with the Jnanapurisvara shrine and related to the compilation of an eighteenth century Sanskrit text, the Varnasramacandrika, sheds some light on how this arrangement at Dharmapuram has come to be. This material will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

The five storied residence of Dharmapuram's head is to the west of the temple complex and is connected both to the matam and to the temple by a sheltered walkway. Further west is a large and very peaceful garden area housing four shrines, the camati of the first successor appointed by Kurunanacampantar, Anantaparavacar, the camati of the twenty-fifth kurumakacannitanam, and the camatis of two other of Dharmapuram's heads are situated in it. This site is considered very sacred ground due to the presence of Anantaparavacar. Local tradition at Dharmapuram venerates him for the depth of his spiritual realization. According to the centre's traditional history,[52] when Kurunanacampantar realized that the day of his final union with Siva was approaching, he sought to appoint a successor to take over some of the more worldly responsibilities of his matam. He selected Anantaparavaca as the most spiritually evolved, and imparted to him the "supreme

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[51] Chaper Four discusses the worship of Tirumalikaittevar in greater detail.

[52] Recounted in Mu. Arunacalam, Guru Jnana Sambandha, pp. 55-57.

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knowledge of God" and then entered into the state of camati. However it seems Anantaparavacar was more highly evolved than the occasion demanded. He prostrated himself at his preceptor's camati, went to a location to the west of it, where there is now the garden area, and himself passed into eternal camati.[53]

Followers of the Adhinam believe that the divine grace emanating from him in the state of camati is a source of spiritual guidance. The decision to inter the twenty-fifth kurumakacannitanam, the predecessor of the present kurumakacannitanam, in this area speaks well for his reputation. His camati is built in the Northern Indian nagara style, in recognition of his "attainment of full realization" (i.e., death) while in Kasi.

In addition to these four camatis there is another grouping of about fifteen camatis to the north of the temple complex, near the river. The rest of Dharmapuram's preceptors are interred at other temple sites.

As for the other buildings on the compound, many house educational institutions. It has a good, if somewhat disorganized, library, and it maintains a printing press, the Jnanacampantam press. There are nursery and primary schools, a Tevaram patacalai, where young temple hymnsingers are trained in the traditional manner, an Agamic patacalai, where young temple priests receive their training in temple

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[53] This turn of events threw the disciples of the matam into some crisis. They gathered at Kurunanacampantar's camati and appealed to him for help. He came out of his camati and annointed another disciple, Satcitananta, as successor. As at Tiruvavatuturai, succession has not always gone easily or peacefully.

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rituals from a sivacarya, an Oriental college and a post-graduate Saiva Siddhanta research institution, the International Institute of Saiva Siddhanta Research, founded on November 28, 1984. As well, the intitution administers a secondary school located just to the west of the Adhinam compound and a matriculation school in Mayilatuturai. The twenty-fifth kurumakacannitanam of Dharmapuram was deeply committed to the propagation of the Saiva tradition, and most of these institutions were started at his instigation. His successor, the present kurumakacannitanam, has founded the post-graduate research institute in memory of his predecessor.

All the lands, both irrigated and dry, that immediately surround the complex are owned by the centre. The land is used for such crops as paddy, coconut plantations, and arica trees. The ceris, or settlements of the labourers who work this land, are likewise owned by the institution. In addition to this land, the institution owns some 25,000 hectares of fertile land, most of which is in the Tanjavur District.[54] It also has considerable investment in immovables, not only in Mayuram, but also in places like Madras, Trichy, Citamparam and Madura.

The present head of the Dharmapuram Adhinam, Sri-la-Sri Canmukatecikar Nanacampanta Paramacariya Cuvamikal, is the twenty-sixth in its line of preceptors. He assumed office in 1971 in rather unusual circumstances. His predecessor "attained the fullness of Siva" somewhat unexpectedly while in Kasi on pilgrimage, without having nominated a

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[54] See n. 50 above, to explain these estimates.

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successor. A leadership crisis followed; without a head, a centre like Dharmapuram is in jeopardy of losing its autonomy to the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board.[55] The crisis was resolved when the tampiran of Dharmapuram convened in the puja mantapa, or hall where Cokkanata is kept, and the present kurumakacannitanam emerged as their proclaimed head. As at Tiruvavatuturai, standard usage at Dharmapuram is succession by designation; however at both of these centres, there have been disruptions of tradition.[56]

Dharmapuram has a fairly large lay following, but there are only about nine initiated ascetics in its order, fewer than at Tiruvavatuturai. One is stationed permanently at Dharmapuram, and is responsible for the maintenance of puja rites at the lineage camatis. The rest are, as can be expected, stationed at temples under Dharmapuram's control. The tampiran who is now stationed at Sirkali was once married and fathered two children before joining the Adhinam. Because he has not been a life-long celibate, he can neither aspire to become, nor be anointed, kurumakacannitanam. The state of life-long celibacy, or naisthika brahmacarya, is essential to the status of kurumakacannitanam at all of these matas in the Tanjavur District, second only in importance to the constraint of being velala.

Suriyanarkoil Adhinam

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[55] Material in the next chapter explains this danger.

[56] The next chapter will discuss these disruptions.

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Suriyanarkoil is an old temple site about seven kilometres to the northwest of Tiruvavatuturai. The temple there is unusual in that Suriya is the main deity; there is perhaps no other temple in Tamilnadu of this sort.[57] The central shrine, where Suriya is installed, is built of stone and faces the west. Brhaspati is given a place in front of the central shrine. Around the main building are minor shrines built out of brick which house the remaining seven planets (Skt. navagrahas). One of two inscriptions of Kulottunga I engraved around the base of temple suggests that it was built during his reign.[58]

The matam is a short distance to the southwest of the temple. Though the present institution at Suriyanarkoil is perhaps older than either the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam or the Dharmapuram Adhinam,[59] it has seen better days. It is a relatively small place, somewhat in disrepair. Not much bigger than a brahmin's residence, it gives the appearance of a deserted dwelling, with several small rooms opening out

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[57] P.V. Jagadisa Ayyar, South Indian Shrines (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, reprint, 1982), p. 313, quoting A.R.E. 1907-8.

[58] Jagadisa Ayyar, p. 314. In inscriptions the temple is called kulottunkacola mattantalayam. Jagadisa Ayyar, p. 313, suggests that Kulottunka I "had some intimate relationship which was related to the Gahadavala Kings of Kanouj who were also Sun worshippers."

[59] The Tirukuttam of Suriyanarkoil (Suriyanarkoil, 1950), p. 14, tells of Civakkirayokikal, a contemporary of Namaccivaya of Tiruvavatuturai, coming from the Tondaimantalam to the area around the Kaveri river in search of a good preceptor. He found such a preceptor at Suriyanarkoil, whose name he assumed when he took over the leadership of the lineage at Suriyanarkoil. Anavaratavinayakar Pillai, in his introduction to the Civaneriprakacam (Siva-Neri-Prakacam, Madras: Madras University Tamil Series, 1936), p. v. states the teacher of Civakkirayokikal built the matam at Suriyanarkoil. I relate this material below.

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onto a central courtyard. In contrast to the other centres, there is little activity going on. On an average day, only the head and a couple of servant-staff can be found in the matam. The present head of Suriyanarkoil, Sri-la-Sri Teyvakikamanitecikar Pantara Cannitanam, apparently has few disciples; however it seems his predecessor was more respected and had initiated some lay followers.[60] Nonetheless, the cannitanam is, as an atinakkarttar (head of a religious institution), invited to special functions at the other centres and their related outposts, notwithstanding whatever disrepute his matam might be in.

A well-known sixteenth century Saiva scholar, Civakkirayokikal (Skt. Sivagrayogi) is associated with the matam on this site. Also known as Civakkoluntu Civaccariyar (Skt. Sivakkoluntu Sivacarya), he is the author of a number of treatises in both Tamil and Sanskrit, including the Sivagrabhasya.[61] Tradition associated with him[62] recounts that he came from a Brahmin family of the Tontaimantalam, or the area to the north of the Cola region. He came to the Kaveri River delta in search of a teacher. The reputation of an exceptional preceptor drew him to Suriyanarkoil, where he was initiated into the kantaparamparai, a lineage of teachers that traces its descent not from Nanti, as do the lineages at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, but from

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[60] One of the Tamil scholars I contacted while in India in 1984 told me that he and his wife had received all three levels of initiation from the predecessor of the present head of the Suriyanarkoil Adhinam.

[61] See V. Devasenapathi, Saiva Siddhanta as Expounded in the Sivajnana-Siddiyar and its Six Commentaries (Madras, Madras University Press, 1974), p.10 for a listing of Sivagrayogi's works.

[62] See n. 56, above.

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Kanta (Skt. Skanda; Subrahmanya). The name of the preceptor was Sivakkolunthu Sivacarya, also known as Sivagra Yogi (Tam. Civakkirayoki), from whom the scholar Civakkirayokikal got his name.

According to the tradition of the institution, this preceptor, the first Civakkirayoki, founded the lineage at Suriyanarkoil. His camati (Skt. samadhi) is right at the entrance of the matam. His disciple, the scholar Civakkirayokikal, had what seems to have been a close connection with the local ruler in Tanjavur,[63] and eventually secured an endowment to establish a matam at Tiruvilimilalai, a temple site some distance away that, like some of the other places discussed here, has legendary associations with the nayanmar. Civakkirayokikal's camati is located at Tiruvilimilalai, and there is still a matam there, but it is now under the control of Tiruvavatuturai.

Today, the Suriyanarkoil Adhinam is headed by a velala, and it has been velala-led for several centuries. Unlike Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, however, this centre identifies some of its early preceptors (including the scholar Civakkirayokikal) as brahmins.[64] It also claims affiliation with a spiritual line of descent, the kantaparamparai, that is different from the kailasaparamparai of the other velala centres in the area. This material will be addressed in Chapter Five.

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[63] Anavaratavinayaka Pillai, "Acariya valaru" in Siva-Neri-Prakasam (Madras: Madras University Tamil Series, 1936), p. vi. Civakkirayokikal dedicates his Saivasannyasapaddhati to Achutyadevarayya, the nayak of Tanjavur.

[64] In the colophon of the Saivasannyasapaddhati, he describes himself as ativarnasrami, beyond varna and asrama.

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In terms of its wealth and sphere of influence, the Suriyanarkoil Adhinam hardly compares with the other three velala matas of the area. It has barely enough land to support its meagre staff, and at present it does not control any temples. Since the middle of this century, its administration has come under the jurisdiction of Tiruvavatuturai. Whatever economic or political power Suriyanarkoil once had has been relinquished to Tiruvavatuturai. From the religious point of view, it is nevertheless, an independent institution. Its head is given full honours due an atinakkarttar. His ritual status is equivalent to that of the heads of Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, though his real power is hardly comparable.

Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal

Of the four non-Brahmin centres in the Tanjavur District, the three just described are - ritually at least - autonomous institutions. The fourth, the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal is not. It is an affiliate of the Dharmapuram Atinam, in what members of both institutions refer to as a "guru-sisya", or teacher-disciple, relationship. According to the centre's tradition, which is widely accepted not only by followers of the two centres, but also by government officials,[65] the original

[65] The last century saw major litigation between the Dharmapuram Adhinam and the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal over the question of succession and control of the Kasi Matha's lands. Records of this litigation appear in Indian Law Review, vol 10, Madras, 1875, pp. 375-508. The court ruled that the Kasi Matha was the "disciple" matam of Dharmapuram partially on evidence of Kumarakuruparar's relationship with the head of Dharmapuram, and partially on evidence produced by

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founder of the Kasi Matha, Kumara Guruparar, was a disciple of the Dharmapuram matam.[66] He originated from Srivaikuntam in the Tirunelveli district. After the usual round of miraculous events, royal patronage and extended stays at temple sites, he made his way to Dharmapuram, where he recognized Macilamani Tecikar, the fourth head of Dharmapuram, as his guru, and eventually took initiation from him. At the same time Kumara Guruparar relinquished to Macilamani Tecikar "all the wealth and honours presented to him by ruling kings and chieftains of the different territories"[67] he had come into contact with prior to his arrival at Dharmapuram. After he was initiated, Kumara Guruparar was directed by Macilamani Tecikar to go to Varanasi, or Kasi, where, according to his life history, he was to establish a matam on the banks of the Ganges. This he did at the Kedar Ghat, apparently with the help of a land grant from the local Nawab.[68]

About a century after Kumara Guruparar, the headquarters of the Kasi Matha was shifted to Tiruppanantal, just twenty kilometres to the west of Dharmapuram. The move took place during the time of Tillai Nayaka Swamikal, Kumara Guruparar's sixth successor who lived during the

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Dharmapuram that this "guru-sisya" relationship continued in succeeding centuries.

66 P. Mutharasu, Life and Works of Saint Kumara Gurupara Swamigal (Tiruppanantal: 1973).

67 Ibid, p. 40. In light of the case referred to in n. 65 above, the inclusion of this sentence in a work that is an official publication of the Kasi Matha is perhaps not insignificant.

68 Ibid., p. 48.

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first half of the eighteenth century.[69] The precise circumstances that led to this move are unknown, but it has been suggested that a southern outpost of the Kasi Matha was needed to manage the properties it acquired either through endowment or outright purchase.[70]

The headquarters in Tiruppanantal have retained control of the site in Kasi, running it like a pilgrimage outpost. There, South Indians Saivites who have an affiliation with these institutions may, while in Kasi, take rest, take meals, and avail themselves of a money transfer service. The centre operates similar "outposts" or matas, at some of the larger pilgrimage centres in South India, namely Ramesvaram, Tiruchendur, Suchindranam and Chidambaram. It also has an outpost in Srivaikuntam, the birthplace of Kumara Guruparar and a resthouse in Morangi, Nepal.[71]

The site at Tiruppannatal is comparable in lay-out to Tiruvavatuturai. The matam is adjacent to the large Siva temple, the Arunajatesvara temple, which, like the temple at Tiruvavatuturai, figures in the legends of the nayanmar.[72] The Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal does not, however, own this temple; the rights of administration rest with Dharmapuram. The matam is surrounded by a

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[69] Ibid., p. 57, and I.L.R. 10 Madras, p. 394.

[70] I.L..R. 10 Madras, p. 427. This document discusses the land transactions in some detail.

[71] I.L.R. 10 Madras, p. 390.

[72] The nayanar, Kunkuliyakalayanayanar is said to have performed a miracle at the temple, by straightening the temple linga with only a slender thread.

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large wall, which houses a complex of offices, reception halls, courtyards, gardens, residences and guest rooms. Though the compound is quite large, it is perhaps only a third the size of Tiruvavatuturai. Also, at Tiruvavatuturai there is, if one can generalize from observation, somewhat more of an emphasis on ritual activities, whereas at Tiruppanantal, the institution gives the impression of an administrative centre. Apart from the ochre cloth, rudraksa, and other Saiva accroutrements of its head, Sri-la-Sri Kasivasi Muthukumaraswami Tampiran Swamigal Avargal, the centre has an appearance not unlike a law office or economic institute in South India.

The Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal is regarded as an off-shoot of Dharmapuram, but in terms of property and annual income, it is richer than the parent-body. Its wealth comes from land and real estate holdings acquired over the centuries.

With this wealth, the centre sponsors a wide range of activities. It runs several educational institutions - two colleges, one at Tiruppanantal, the other at Srivaikuntam and a middle and primary school at Tiruppanantal - and financially supports several others.[73] It has endowed scholarship funds, bursaries, library purchases, university lecture series on the Saiva tradition, food charities, subsistence allowances for temple priests, and so on.[74] Some of the activities, such as the feeding of Brahmins, sadhus and the poor, have historically been done in matas. Others, such as the establishment of a Saiva

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[73] P. Mutharasu, Life and Works of Saint Kumara, p. 66.

[74] ibid., pp. 62-75.

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Siddhanta chair at the Benares Hindu University, are recent innovations, though scholarship has traditionally been associated with these centres. The Kasi Matha also operates a printing press, which publishes Saiva religious and philosophical works, as well as the monthly Sri Kumarakurupara. And, of course, the institution has a ritual calendar which includes daily rites to the matam's founder, the lineage, and the lineage's deities, a festival cycle, and an annual pilgrimage circuit for its head. This trip takes him to the Kasi Matha's outposts and is done as much for administrative as for religious purposes.

The Problem

As is apparent from the descriptions above, the institutions at Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram, Suriyanarkoil, and Tirupanantal are hardly places of retreat or meditation. Furthermore, there is little evidence that they were different in the past. There has been some innovation and diversification at these centres in keeping with the changing circumstances of South Indian society in the twentieth century. Endowments for public education, extensive litigation, correspondence courses, involvement in social welfare all reflect the spirit of modern India, yet, however innovative, these activities are not contrary to the basic orientation of these institutions. From all evidence on hand, these institutions were, right from the beginning, centres that operated in a social network. Perhaps some of their recent forays into modern

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education and the like have shifted their focus slightly, but underneath the layers of activities built up over several centuries is an institution that, by all indication, was never meant to be world renouncing.

So, if these centres are not cloisters in a typical sense, what then are they? The answer is not that easy to come by, and this thesis is addressed to that question as much as it is addressed to any other. At first glance, there is something quite paradoxical about these institutions; they are organized arcund ascetic membership in a spiritual lineage, yet they control great wealth and power. Their tampiran cut all ties with kin, and yet kin-based caste affiliation is the basis of their membership. At Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, there is a "community" of ascetics, but its members are fanned out at temple sites throughout South India. The centres have produced some fine examples of Tamil scholarship, but now the scholars are far outnumbered by accountants and pleaders. How to make sense of it all? In the course of South Indian history, these institutions made sense, even if they no longer seem to do so.

Part of the difficulty a Western scholar has in coming to an understanding of these institutions is conceptual. When matas are defined as monasteries or seminaries, as often happens, the idea of what a monastery or seminary is, or should be, tends to cloud one's understanding of the context in which matas operate in South India. Furthermore, the very complexity of their nature has thus far precluded any simple understanding of what these institutions are. Some evidence

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relates matas to temple organization, and in later times to temple administration; other evidence relates them to sectarian identity; other material to caste patterns; yet other material to networks of influence that were political as well as economic. To date, an understanding of how all of these factors fit together has not been forthcoming. Below is a brief review of some earlier endeavours to explain these institutions' networks of operations.

Monastic Model

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century legal writings that took notice of these centres, there was a tendency to focus on the tampirans' asceticism. The work of legal scholars and pandits trained in the Dharmastric tradition, these writings equated asceticism with the state of sannyasa, and thus tried to fit these Saiva institutions into a monastic model conceived in the image of a retreat founded by Sankara. For example, the 1875 Madras Law Review write-up[75] of the ruling on a suit brought against the head of Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal by the head of Dharmapuram begins with an "historical" overview that traces the origin of matas back to Sankara, and states, "the origin of [the Tanjavur] associations, their constitution and development form part of the history of the establishment and spread of the Brahminical system of religious doctrine among sudra communities in

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[75] Cited in n. 62, above.

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South India."[76] This view is further reflected in other court cases which entertained concerns such as whether sudras (i.e., non-Brahmin velalas) were entitled to take sannyasa.[77] As a result of this approach, the centres have been condemned for not being like the model. The notion that the Tanjavur centres ought to be running like Sankara retreats, but are not, and thus are degenerate, holds even today; officials with the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Board in Madras tend to look at the velala atinams as corrupt places that lost sight of their original purpose.[78] In urban centres especially, an unflattering comparison with the popular image of advaita vedanta retreats often creeps into casual conversation about the Tanjavur matas. That the comparison might not be relevant is not considered.

Caste Conflict

Other scholars have focussed attention on the velala or non-Brahmin make-up of the Tanjavur centres. This approach has led to models of caste conflict and tension,[79] or alternately, models of

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[76] I.L.R. 10 Madras, p. 385.

[77] I.L.R. 22 Mardas, 1899.

[78] I gained this impression in several conversations I had with representatives of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board, both in Madras and on site at Tiruvavatuturai.

[79] See Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, pp. 230-38. Several scholars have written on the topic of sectarian movements and caste reform. The comments of K. Ishwaran, "Bhakti Tradition and Modernization" in Jayant Lele, ed., Tradition and Modernity in Bhakti Movements (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), p. 74, are

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imitation, sometimes suggesting a process of sanskritization.[80] According to a model of caste conflict, the development of non-Brahmin centres is correlated with attempts to undermine Brahminical authority: "under the control of non-Brahmin gurus or mathapatis during the thirteenth century [and] as centres of Saiva Siddhanta ... [the matas] were the institutionalized aspect of the major role taken by the sect's Vellala progenitors."[81] As appealing as a notion of peasant uprising might be, solid evidence linking the Tanjavur centres to caste revolt is sorely lacking; Stein's dating is wrong and his assumptions about sectarian movements merit re-examination.[82]

The idea of caste antagonism reflects the anti-Brahmin sentiment of Tamil politics in this century, and at times the non-Brahmin centres have themselves contributed to it. Dharmapuram, Suriyanarkoil and Tiruvavatuturai have each produced chronicles

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particularly revealing:

> For instance, [the bhakti movement] vaguely castigated caste as an iniquitous system, and, in practice, provided for some extraordinary individuals some escape from its crippling regime but it tended to blunt the consciousness of its victims through religious mystification. It is not, therefore, surprising that individual dissent spills over into protest which is somewhat organized, and eventually results in "reform movements"....

[80] See introductory remarks in G.A. Oddie, "The Character, Role, and Significance of Non-Brahmin Saivite Maths in Tanjore District in the Nineteenth Century", and B.G.L. Swamy, "The Golaki School of Saivism in the Tamil Country" in Journal of Indian History, vol. LIII, no. 1 (April 1975), pp. 203-5.

[81] Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, p. 232.

[82] To be fair, I should mention that his treatment of the Saiva Siddhanta matas amounts to no more than passing references.

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(valalaru) which include accounts of Brahmin hostility to the centres.[83] In the 1930's the head of Dharmapuram, Sri-la-Sri Cuppiramanya Tecikar had two Sanskrit texts edited and published, the Saivasannyasapaddhati of Suriyanarkoil's Civakkirayokikal[84] and the Varnasramacandrika of Dharmapuram's Tiruvampalatecikar.[85] The English and Tamil introductions to the two publications convey the impression that the non-Brahmin matas had repeatedly faced Brahminical challenges, an impression not entirely corroborated by the material in the texts. As will be evident in the chapters that follow, caste affiliation was extremely important in the development of these centres, but a simple model of caste conflict offers little insight into their workings.

By the same token, theories of sanskritization[86] or modelling on brahmin institutions[87] have the same definitional imprecision. Some of the work done within this framework is an open attack on theories of

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[83] The Tirukkuttam of Suriyanarkoil, pp. 24-25 records a story of how Civakkirayokikal was approached by the Tanjavur nayaka, Cevappanayakka, to resolve a debate among Smarta Brahmins in his court on whether members of the fourth varna were fit to take sannyasa. This debate implicitly questioned the legitimacy of the velala centres. A similar version of the same account appears in Tiruvavatuturai Atina Varalaru, pp. 12-13. Dharmapuram's introduction to the Varnascramacandrika (Mayuram and Kumbhakonam: Dharmapuram Adhinam, 1930) recounts an oddly similar story.

[84] Sivagrayogin [Civakkirayokikal], Saivasannyasapaddhati, edited by Ramasastri and Narayanasastri (Kumbhakonam: Dharmapuram Adhinam, 1932).

[85] Tiruvampalattecikar, Varnasramacandrika, grantha edition, edited by Narayanasastri (Mayuram and Kumbhakonam: Dharmapuram Adhinam, 1930).

[86] I.L.R. 10 Madras, p. 385.

[87] G.A. Oddie, "The Character Role and significance of Non-Brahmin Saivite Maths", p. 38.

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conflict,[88] but arguments that rest with theories of imitation or assimilation hardly advance our understanding of how the Tanjavur centres fit into the web of political, economic, and social systems that entwine any institution in India - or elsewhere for that matter.

Seminaries

Seminary is another image applied to the Tanjavur matas. Their association with the Saiva Siddhanta tradition and Tamil scholarship has led to the conclusion that the "main purpose of the founding of the three Saiva maths was to establish and expound the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy"[89] or "maths became...types of seminaries...."[90] Works such as K.A. Nilakanta Sastri's The Colas[91] and R.N. Nandi's Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan[92] have contributed to this image of a matam. Though not referring in particular to the sixteenth century Tanjavur centres, Nilakanta Sastri's work discusses matas in two contexts: in reference to educational institutions[93] and in reference to

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[88] See B.G.L. Swamy, p. 205.

[89] K. Nambi Arooran, "Three Saivite Muths in Tanjavur", p. 54.

[90] G.A. Oddie, "The Character, Role and Significance of Non-Brahmin Saivite Maths", p. 38.

[91] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Colas, 2nd, edition (Madras: University of Madras, 1975).

[92] R.N. Nandi, Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972).

[93] Nilankanta Sastri, The Colas, pp. 628-634.

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religious institutions.[94] The work never gives a clear definition of a matam (matha in the Colas), and in fact shies away from providing one. About the closest Nilakanta Sastri ever gets to a definition is ascetics' organizations: "ascetics owned no property themselves; but their organizations, the monasteries (mathas), often owned vast estates devoted to their maintenance and the encouragement of learning and the arts."[95] Lineages of ascetics did control estates, but whether these estates were owned and whether they were devoted to the ascetics' maintenance or to the encouragement of learning and the arts are other issues altogether.

With regard to the notion of seminary, Nilakanta Sastri suggests that matas were seminaries with statements such as: "education...was pursued in schools and colleges attached to mathas and temples."[96] He conveys the same sense when he speaks of a medical school at Tiruvavatuturai on the basis of an inscription dating 1121 CE.[97] He notes that "among persons who were to be fed in a matha in that place were students of medicine and grammar..."[98] Yet, the matam in question here is not a medical school; it is a mess hall. His work highlights the connection between centres of culture - temples and the matas associated with them - and cultural transmission - education - in

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[94] Ibid., pp. 647-652.

[95] Ibid, p. 649.

[96] Ibid, p. 629.

[97] A.R.E. no. 159 of 1925.

[98] Ibid., p. 632.

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a traditional society, but a model of the matam as seminary precludes careful reading of the data concerning matas.

Need for Another Model of Understanding

The characteristics of the velala institutions of the Tanjavur district are striking. To argue that their primary purpose was to offer retreat to those who wished to contemplate eternal mysteries, or to maintain that they were essentially types of seminaries is to ignore other evidence which gives a fuller picture of their institutional context. The matas are places where members of well-defined lineages live; the internal organization of these lineages is based on a guru-disciple relationship, the line of succession is maintained through this relationship, and the members of these lineages are ascetics. However, these institutions are more than centres where ascetics live and perpetuate their teachings. The residents of these matas of the Tanjavur District have always been involved in complex interactions with various corporate groups. In the course of their history, different types of donors - local figures, distant rulers, caste consortiums, for example - have patronized them as well as enlisted their services as overseers of temple and other endowments. These endowments have made the residents of the matas absentee landlords as well as participants in a ritual process, and have linked them to places quite distant from the Kaveri delta. These processes and their interconnections hold clues to an understanding of the centres, not isolated features such as their

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residents' asceticism, non-Brahmin make-up, or sectarian affiliations, to name a few. In other words, the key to coming to an appreciation of these institutions is not reconciling vast landholdings with asceticism, for example, but rather in seeing both features in relation to social systems that were set in place in pre-colonial South India. This study proposes to establish a framework for understanding the nature of these centres that will allow later studies to look at these institutions in their social context.

In other words, by rejecting other definitions and conceptual models of matas, I have had to construct my own, basing these constructions on what I understood to be the defining characteristics of these centres. I sought to accomplish this task by approaching a wide range of sources to gauge the institutions' scope of activity. I discuss these sources below to explain the conceptual model this work constructs. This model argues that lineage forged by "fictive kin" ties based on the notion of an extended family group is the key to understanding the Saiva centres that are located along the Kaveri River in Tamilnadu, South India. As a group defined by their membership in a spiritual lineage, the residents of each of these Saiva centres made up a clearly defined and recognizable unit in pre-colonial South Indian society. Their other features such as asceticism, sectarian affiliation, velala background, literary output, and distinct ritual practices, are characteristics that devolve from their essential make-up as a lineage group. In this thesis I also suggest that this model of a horizontally-linked group defined by lineage membership can be used to

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enhance our understanding of the Saiva centres' arena of operation, which has historically involved their members in interactions with other groups in the local economy. Future work will focus on the centres' network of involvement during a specific period of time, for it is recognized that these institutions continued to respond to the changing character of South Indian society as the state and society underwent alterations during different periods of history. Mindful of the dynamic character of these institutions, this work has endeavoured to construct a model of understanding that allows for change and development. It maintains that this model is found in the concept of lineage.

Before I turn to a discussion of my sources, I need to make one other clarification. When I refer to the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, the Dharmapuram Adhinam, and the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal collectively, I use the phrases "velala institutions", "velala centres", "Saiva institutions" or "Saiva centres". "Institution" or "centre" are the words that I use to refer to the lineage group, which I identify through the use of characteristic terms "velala" or "Saiva". For reasons that will become clear below, I have chosen not to use the term matam to identify the lineage groups.

Sources

The sources I consulted to gain an understanding of these velala centres range from classical material, inscriptions, hagiographies, doctrinal and ritual writings to contemporary records, first person

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observation and interviews. In recognizing the complexity of the centres' workings, I sought such a wide range of sources to gauge the institutions' scope of activity. In the following paragraphs I discuss how I used this material.

Because part of the problem of understanding the nature of the Saiva centres in Tanjavur (which are conveniently called Saiva matas in the few English language works that have studied them[99]) appeared to be rooted in the way the term matam was defined, I sought a definition of the term by reading extensively in the Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy, paying careful attention to the way the term matam appeared and was used in temple inscriptions. Based on the pattern of usage that I recognized, I realized that the matam and the people or groups who often occupied a matam represented two different abstract entities. The matam is a part of the temple complex; it is a place where ritual transactions often based on a form of food offering took place. In some, but not all matas, groups of individuals resided. These groups were identified with the matam in the sense that they lived there and often controlled some of the transactions that took place in the matam, but the group and the matam are not coterminous. I have organized my discussion in the chapters that follow in such a way as to highlight the distinctness of the place (the matam) and the people who lived in the matam (which in this thesis is a set of related lineage groups).

I also consulted epigraphical evidence that related

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[99] See, for example, G.A. Oddie, "The Character, Role, and Significance of Three Non-Brahman Saiva Maths in Tanjore District in the Nineteenth Century".

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specifically to the velala institutions. Because such little work has been done on these institutions, even the very first step of gathering together the epigraphical references to these centres (that may be located in a myriad of places) had not been undertaken before, I attempted to locate as many epigraphical references to these centres as possible. References to these centres appear in places as far away as Mysore and Travancore. Only a couple of the copper-plate grants in possession of the centres themselves have been published, and only very recently,[100] the rest are still unedited, though transcripts of them were graciously provided to me by Pulavar Iracu of the Tamil University in Tanjavur. The specific data pertaining to the centres found in the epigraphical sources enhanced my understanding of the centres' scope of activity. More detailed analysis of the copper-plate grants will be completed in another work.

For an understanding of the velala institutions, I turned to the centres themselves. Each centre offers its own hagiographical chronicle of its line of preceptors. These accounts, and their supporting oral traditions, had the appearance of genealogies or caste histories, that established the identity of the group. These works provided candid reflections on the centres's understanding of their own make-up; the importance they attached to the line of descent and their repeated reference to the rites of initiation that admitted members to the group indicated the central importance of lineage. The hagiographies are on

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[100] Ce. Iracu, Tancai Marattiyar Ceppetukal - 50 (Tancavur: Tamilp Palkalaik Kalakam, 1983).

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the whole, however, devoid of contextual information; little attention is paid in these accounts to the social environment in which they were produced. They offer only tantalizing glimpses of what they perceived their institutions' position to be in a larger social system, or the nature of their interactions with other groups in South India to be at any time.

Fuller understanding of the institutions' workings came from nearly a year of close association with them. Without the insights gained while staying at the centres, observing and participating in their activities, my understanding of the workings of these centres would be much more incomplete. A close awareness of the comings and goings at these centres gave a coherence to their extensive social network that can not be found in any description. The understanding I gained from contact with the centres helped me interpret written evidence that was often inconclusive or incomplete. Participation in three celebrations of gurupuja drew my attention to the importance of lineage as it was articulated in the ritual process. Likewise, without the witness of an exchange of honours between kurumakacannitanam, the head of the centre, and a temple priest, the relationship between the velala lineage groupings and other ritually defined groups in South India could easily have been misunderstood, and the implications of a copper-plate grant appointing the head of one of the Saiva institutions as endowment manager would not have been so clear. In this respect, close exposure to the centres provided me with a sharp picture of them, one quite different from any images encountered in the published

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literature.

For deeper understanding of the centres' ritual patterns, I consulted the ritual manuals, known as paddhati texts. Here I found the work of Helene Brunner-Lachaux[101] to be especially helpful. The reading of paddhati texts led me to an eighteenth century work produced by Dharmapuram, called the Varnasramacandrika.[102] It addresses the question of the suitability of a member of the fourth varna to assume the role of religious preceptor. As velalas were sometimes considered sudras, or members of the fourth varna, this work shed light on the connection not only between lineage and caste, but also on how the larger community responded to those connections. I have devoted a chapter to this work.

I also read some of the poetics produced by members of the institutions to understand the religious meanings they attached to their rituals. The literary output of the velala centres is considerable; many of these works are fine examples of Tamil scholarship and religiosity. In this area as well, my thesis has but touched the surface of what these works have to offer. Other information comes from a variety of sources. The court cases in which these centres were involved in the late nineteenth century shed light on their earlier

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[101] Helene Brunner-Lachaux, Somasambhupaddhati. Troisieme Partie. Rituels occasionnels dans la tradition sivaite de l'Inde du Sud selon Somasambhu. II: diksa, abhiseka, vratoddhara, antyesti, sraddha (Pondichery: Institut francais d'Indologie, 1977).

[102] Tiruvampalatecikar, Varnasramacandrika, edited by Narayanasastri and other scholars, with an introduction by Na. Cattainatattampiran (Mayuram and Kumbhakonam: Dharmapuram, 1930).

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history, and on the public, or legal perceptions, of these centres. The records of British administrators also help to provide some information on the pre-colonial period. Another source of information that has hitherto been untapped[103] is a body of talapuranas that were produced in Tamil mainly from the late fifteenth century onwards, although there are earlier ones such as the Koyilpuranam. Many of these texts were produced by members of these velala centres and other members of teacher-disciple lineages, some of which are related to, but predate those of the present centres. This extensive body of talapurana cover many of the temples that are at present under the trusteeship of the velala lineages or are sites where the lineages still administer kattalais. These talapurana usually include a verse honouring the lineage (kuruvanakkam) that can be used to identify the institutional affiliation of their authors. The series of talapurana produced by a particular lineage thus draws the temples depicted in the works into that lineage's tradition. As there is evidence that many of these same temples also had kattalais administered by representatives of the matas, the role of these works and the information they contain merited some attention. In these and other works produced by members of the velala institutions, I also paid careful attention to the verses which pay homage to the preceptors (kuruvanakam) for the purpose of tracing the roots of the lineage.

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[103] David Dean Shulman, Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in South Indian Saiva Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), discusses the stories recounted in the talapuranas, but he has chosen to limit his discussions to a structural study of the myths.

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The images and ideas I obtained from this material notwithstanding, the data are fragmentary at best. Even with the matas' own compilations of their traditions, forays into epigraphical sources, interpolations of ritual texts, careful readings of others' accounts of regional history in South India, and nearly a year's association with the centres, many questions about the matas' development cannot be answered with anything more substantial than creative reconstruction and conjecture. At times, important trends can only be suggested; at other times, only the questions entertained. For example, there is no way of second guessing why the preceptor of Dharmapuram's founder sent his disciple off to Dharmapuram; nor will we ever know for certain why certain individuals chose to patronize these matas. We can only conjecture on the evidence available.

Organization of Material

The study is divided into four sections, each of which addresses a theme that relates to the make-up of these velala centres. Each of these sections, with the exception of the last is made up of several chapters. The first section discusses lineage; its material is divided into two parts: 1) a general introduction to the way that the centres are organized around the concept of lineage and 2) an examination of the initiation and other rites that define the group and admit members into it. Chapter One opens with a general overview of the way lineage figures in the make-up of the velala institution. The discussion

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examines the relationship of lineage to sectarian identity. Chapter One introduces the concept of "fictive kin" links. It provides some background to the centres' traditions, and demonstrates the connection between lineage and its location at a particular site, comparing this relationship to that of a deity at a temple site. Chapter Two examines the way membership in the lineage is defined by looking at the internal organization and ritual make-up of the institutions. Based on material from the centres' chronicles, associated ritual texts, and on my own observations, this chapter sheds light on how the centres defined themselves in relation to the caste groupings out of which their members emerged. The chapter also discusses the relationship of the head of the lineage to both lay and ascetic members, and it examines the initiation rites in some detail. The final section of this chapter turns to the centres' institutional asceticism, and suggests that the institutionalization of asceticism enabled members of the lineages to transcend the bonds of kinship and locality by forging "fictive" kin links allowing for supra-local integration.

Part Two turns to the historical roots of the velala centres. This section of the thesis is divided into three chapters: 1) a discussion of the kailasa paramparai (the line of succession from Mount Kailasa), 2) an examination of earlier figures who lived on the site where one of the centres is now located, and 3) a discussion of other religious institutions that seem to have influenced the development of the velala ascetic lineages. Chapter Three, the first chapter of Part Two, looks at the velala lineages' accounts of their own origin and

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relates this material to other evidence we have of the period. The lineages identify themselves as the line of Kailasa (kailasa paramparai); this chapter seeks to identify some of the figures cited in the early line of descent. The next chapter, Chapter Four, continues to look at the early history of the lineages. It explores the connections between the later velala institutions and Tirumular and Tirumalikaittevar, both of whom were closely associated with Tiruvavatuturai, the site of one of the present velala centres. This chapter reviews the life history of Tirumalikaittevar, who merits special attention because his camati (tomb shrine) is located right in the middle of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam. The account of Tirumalikaittevar's life is taken from the prose version of the Turaicaippuranam, an eighteenth century compilation of Tiruvavatuturai's legendary history. The chapter suggests that the development of the velala institutions was influenced by a cittar (mystical) tradition, the influence of which has been hidden in the present chronicles of the institutions.

Chapter Five, the last chapter of Part Two, looks at other influences on the velala lineage's development. This chapter examines evidence of earlier lineages in South India, some of which can be traced back to Northern India. On the basis of epigraphical and literary evidence which shows the settlement in the Tamil region of lineages that had their origins in Northern India, this chapter suggests that the institutional structure of the velala lineages was influenced by these groups and their settlement patterns.

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Part Three takes up the discussion of matam. As discussed above, preliminary research indicated that the lineage and the matam (a structure that is part of the temple complex) the lineage occupied represent two different abstract entities. This section of the thesis explores the definition of matam and addresses the question of the religious significance of the settlement of ascetic lineages in matas. This section of the thesis is made up of three chapters: 1) a discussion of the matam as part of the temple complex, 2) an analysis of the ritual transactions that took place in matas that help account for the settlement of lineage groups in close proximity to temples, and 3) a comparison of the earlier patterns of ritual with a present rite that takes place within the matam. Chapter Six, the first chapter of this section, draws on epigraphical sources and textual material to provide a definition of matam. A careful reading of this material indicates a consistent proximity of the matam and temple, a proximity necessitated by the ritual transactions that occurred in matas. The next chapter, Chapter Seven, addresses these activities. It examines the records of endowments that were made to provide food offerings in matas and suggests that the matam was the designated place where such food offerings occurred. The discussion explores the ritual logic of such offerings and argues that a very specific form of dana (gifting) that is rooted in values of lineage propitiation can acccount in part for the presence of members of ascetic lineages at temple sites. Chapter Eight looks at gurupuja, the central ritual of Tiruvavatuturai's calendar year, to demonstrate that earlier patterns of specific dana offerings

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still obtain.

The final section of the thesis addresses the relationship between members of the velala lineages and other religious authorities. I argue elsewhere in the work that caste is obviously part of the self-definition of the velala lineages. The last chapter of the thesis, Chapter Nine, takes up the question of caste affiliation and ritual prerogative as it pertained to the lineages' make-up. This chapter focusses on an early eighteenth century text, the Varnasramacandrika, which deals with the issue of ritual qualification. According to the traditional account of why it was written, the text was compiled in response to an attack on the velala institutions' legitimacy. From my reading of the text and the account of the circumstances that led to its compilation, I conclude that there is evidence to suggest competition between religious groups for patronage. From this material I also suggest that the leadership of these groups utilized tradition and religious authority to gain access to resources both tangible and intangible. This chapter concludes with a few comments about direction for future research.

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SECTION ONE

LINEAGE

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CHAPTER ONE

LINEAGE

Notwithstanding their far-flung network of involvement in temple affairs, educational endowments, and other activities, the institutions housed at Tiruvavatuturai, Suriyanarkoil, Dharmapuram and Tirupanantal are religious brotherhoods in their most fundamental form. In this section I take up the discussion of the institutions as religious brotherhoods and examine their internal organization. My first topic is lineage. I begin with some general observations about spiritual or teaching lineages, then I describe the velala institutions' lines of descent. Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram and Tiruppanantal, Dharmapuram's "sisya matha", recognize and share early lineage histories, while the centre at Suriyanarkoil defines its line of descent differently. My main discussion will be on the lineage group of Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, though I will refer to Suriyanarkoil's lineage later in the chapter.

The topic of lineage leads into a discussion of initiation (diksa), for it is through forms of initiation that membership in the lineage is obtained as well as succession rites determined. That ritual

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process is taken up in Chapter Two. In that chapter I also look at the rites that are integral to the lineages and thus to the institutions. The final section of Chapter Two explores the larger ramifications of the lineages' institutional asceticism.

Through-out this and the next section of the thesis, my focus is on lineage, rather than on the centre, or matam. The connection between the lineage and the matam is more complex than first meets the eye and requires a separate discussion. The third section of the thesis will take up the task of defining the matam. The material which follows in that section will develop the connections between the velala Saiva lineages and the places where they are headquartered.

Lineage

Membership in a special lineage is what provides the velala centres with their basic identity. Affiliation with the Saiva tradition is but part of this identity, for though Siva is regarded as the supreme godhead by the members of the centres, and they regard themselves as Saiva Siddhantins, their religious, sectarian, and corporate identity is derived from the paramparai (Skt. parampara), or tradition, to which the members of each centre belong. The parampara, defined by the traditional line of teachers, in turn determines the shape of the tradition followed, "the complicated variations in ritual performances arising from the theological and metaphysical background of the parampara, and the personal attitude and idiosyncrasies of the eminent

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teachers of the line."[104]

These parampara are often referred to as sects, but that term can be misleading if it is thought to refer to a religious movement consisting of breakaway, or reformist groups. Initiation was - and still is, though the number who solicit it at present are few[105] - what determined formal membership in a paramparai. Further, notwithstanding the often repeated idea that such groups were egalitarian in their welcoming of servants, women and untouchables into their folds, caste membership, which in turn was rooted in kinship ties, played important roles in determining who was eligible for initiation into the lineages of Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram and Suriyanarkoil. The traditional histories of the centres emphasize the velala parentage of the preceptors of the lineages.[106] There are some exceptions to this general rule of velala background, and some of the very early preceptors of the line predating the actual beginnings of the lines located at Tiruvavatuturai, Suriyanarkoil, and Dharmapuram are identified as

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[104] Sanjukta Gupta, "Modes of Worship and Meditation" in Hindu Tantrism by Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), p. 122.

[105] T.N. Ramachandran, Director of the International Institute of Saiva Siddhanta Research, Dharmapuram, personal communication, estimated that no more than a total of thirty people in Tamilnadu at present have received diksa from any of the heads of the Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram lineages.

[106] The accounts (carittam) of Tiruvavatuturai's preceptors in the Kuruparamparai Vilakkam emphasize their good velala family. For example, in Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 44, the third sentence of the account of Marainanatecikar, Tiruvavatuturai's second preceptor, draws attention to his velala parentage.

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sivacaryas, or members of what is now a temple priest caste grouping,[107] yet still the well-established life-stories of lineage figures such as Kumarakuruparar, Kurunanacampantar, Minaksicuntiram Pillai, Civananamunivar, Namaccivaya, Ampalavanatecikar, and others stand firm on velala identity as a defining characteristic of the members of these lineages.

The point I wish to emphasize here is the difference between who was eligible to be a member of the lineage, and who might have other connections with the lineage. Mahratta kings,[108], locality rulers[109],

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[107] The most notable of these is Civakkirayokikal, the founder of the lineage at Suriyanarkoil. The Tirukuttam of Suriyanarkoil points out that his background was that of a sivacarya, though he was a renunciate when he took up residence at Suriyanarkoil.

[108] Documents housed in the Sarasvati Mahal Library of Tanjavur record several instances of the Tanjavur Mahratta rulers having contact with members of these velala lineages. These documents consist of the Modi Tamil Manuscripts, Modi documents translated into Tamil and bound into eleven volumes; the Moti Palakani, two volumes containing copies of Tamil documents; and 48 bundles of Tamil pages summarizing material in the Modi Manuscripts. Vol 1, no. 198, of the bound Modi Tamil Manuscripts records an endowment of a village to the tampiran of the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal by a Mahratta ruler deposited in 1737. The annual income of this endowment was to be used to conduct a special feeding (mahesvarapuja, which I will discuss in detail in the next section) in Benares. Material from bundle 5, sheets 117-127 indicate that Serfoji II stayed in the matam of the Kasi tampiran of Tiruppanantal while on pilgrimage to Benares during 1820-21. The Mahratta rulers also used the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal as a banking service; at a loading charge of 10%, money to be used while on pilgrimage was deposited with the matam in Tiruppanantal and picked up when the pilgrim arrived in Benares. See Ke. Me.Venkataramaiya, Tancai Marattiya Mannar Kala Araciyalum Camutaya Valkkaiyum (Tancavur: Tamilp Palkalaik Kalakam, 1985), pp. 422-41 and 498-501 for discussion of the material relating to the Tanjavur matas that is found in the Modi documents.

Copper-plate inscriptions from the Mahratta rule make mention of representatives of these centres. Dharmapuram Adhinam copper-plate no 4 (no 28 in Ce. Iracu, Tancai Marattiyar Ceppettukal-50, Tancavur, Tamilp Palkalai Kalakam, 1983, pp. 188-91) records that Muttu

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and merchant and other caste consortiums[110] had occasion to avail themselves of certain services of these velala preceptors, but these were service relationships, typical of the occupation-specific jajmani interactions of caste. In the records available today,[111] there are no descriptions of kings, local rulers, or others seeking blessings alone from members of the velala lineages; rather in this material,

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Kumaracamittampiran (of the Kasi Matha) was appointed to the agency of overseeing (atikaram) the administration of the revenue from a gift of wet land made by the Mahratta king Tulaji in 1770 to the temple at Tirumullaivayal.

[109] As seen from about twelve copper-plates inscriptions in possession of Tiruvavatuturai and three from Tiruppanantal, local rulers of the Putukottai region, who were known as tontaiman, named representatives of these centres as agents to administer endowments they made temples in their area. An example comes from inscription no. 768 of the Putukottai collection, dated 1798 CE, records that a gift of land by Raja Vijaiya Reghunatharaya Bahadur Tondaimanar for offerings, lamps, and worship in the a temple was made through Mavunatampiran of the lineage of Civananacampantar (Kurunanacampantar) of Dharmapuram.

[110] An inscription from a copper-plate in possession of the Madras Museum (Madras Museum copper-plate 2, number 6 in Ce. Iracu, Tancai Marattiyar Ceppettukal-50, pp. 44-54), dated 1714, records that the rettis of fourteen sub-castes met at the sacred place Pullir ukkumvelur, purchased a house-site in the south street and built a matam for the use of members of their community engaged in conducting various rituals in the temple of Vayittanata-cuvami in the village. At that time Ampalavanattampiran of Dharmapuram held the position of kattalai atikaram, manager of endowments to the temple. Through his agency, a person called Tampapantaram was put in charge of the matam for the retti cultivators. The grant records the schedule of contributions each member of the caste grouping was to contribute to the maintenance of the matam.

[111] I recognize that the nature of the evidence - copper-plate inscriptions, royal documents, and legal records - may bias the analysis.

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representatives of spiritual lineages are named as recipients or agents[112] in a transactional process of gifting that provided spiritual benefits for the endower and material benefits for the endowee. I will come back to this material at the end of Chapter Two. In Part Three I will discuss the transactions of gifting.

Another example of demonstrations of devotion that are rooted in service relationships shows up today on important ritual occasions celebrated by the centres. The gurupuja celebration described in detail below is one such occasion; a festival Dharmapuram celebrates on ati amavacai, the new moon day in the Tamil month of ati is another.[113] During the course of these ceremonies there are moments when low caste men and women - some of whom are untouchables - who are employed within the matam or in their fields come before the head of the centre to receive his blessings and small gifts of coin. To claim that these landless labourers are members of the "sect" on account of their

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[112] I use the term "agent" to indicate brokerage. As an endowment was usually not a one-time gift of money, but a grant of income from land that would be turned over to the temple on an on-going basis for eternity, or as long as the sun and moon shined, assurance of the continuity of the gifting was obtained by appointing an agent to oversee its management. In many records, a representative of a spiritual lineage was named as a trustee of the endowment to ensure its future. An example will clarify. In a Tiruvarur copper-plate (Tiruvarur copper-plate 2, number 8 in Ce. Iracu, Tancai Marattiyar Ceppettukal-50, pp. 62-67), a grant of income from a village was made by a locality leader, the Capayi Viceyarekunata Meyykkan Kopalan of Pampavalanatu, for the merit of the Mahratta king, Tukkoji. This grant, for ablutions and oblations to the deity of the temple, was placed in the hands of Akoracova-pantaram. He was a member of a velala lineage, who held the office of abhiseka-kattalai at the temple. This office managed the endowments for abhisekam, such as the one this grant records.

[113] I will make reference to this celebration below in Chapter Two.

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periodic demonstrations of devotion (or loyalty) to the head of the centre is to misunderstand the nature of their interactions. For them, the head of the lineage is a religious figure,[114] but he is also their landlord, and more importantly, the source of their daily income. He is what links them to the redistributive process of goods and services that sustains their livelihood. Rather than a sect, the lineage makes up one unit, and a considerably powerful one at that, in the segmentary structure of South Indian society.

The velala centres claim common lines of descent back through the fifteenth century and beyond into times primordial, but each of the centres begins its line of descent with the preceptor who settled at the site where the centre is now located. Thus, for example, Kurunanacampantar is reckoned to be the first preceptor of Dharmapuram's line, even though everyone associated with the centre can recite the story of Kurunanacampantar's relationship with his teacher, Kamalainanaprakacar of Tiruvarur. This story of Kurunanacampantar's quest for a guru which took him from Madurai to Tiruvarur, his initiation, and his unwavering devotion to Kamalainanaprakacar is readily recounted by anyone at Dharmapuram,[115] yet reverence to the

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[114] In May 1984 at Tiruvavatuturai's outpost in Avutaiyarkoil, I saw sweepers of the matam allowed to prostrate before kurumakacannitanam when he came for a visit. These same sweepers were not, however, allowed to participate in the communal meal (mahesvarapuja) celebrated by the close disciples of the lineage. I will discuss the features of mahesvarapuja in the next section of this thesis.

[115] This story is published in Mu. Arunacalam, Guru Jnana Sambandhar. The Philosopher Inspired by Madurai (Dharmapuram, 1972 and 1981).

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founder of the lineage is directed only at Kurunanacampantar. Though Kamalainanaprakacar is important as the preceptor's preceptor, Dharmapuram's first guru is Kurunanacampantar. The lineage is tied to the locality.[116]

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[116] When a preceptor directs a disciple to another temple site, the settlement of the disciple there begins another line. The relationship between Dharmapuram and Tiruppanantal exemplifies this connection to locality. The line of the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal was begun when the fourth preceptor of Dharmapuram, Macilamani Tecikar, sent one of his tampiran, Kumarakuruparar, north to Kasi to built a matam. From that time on, the line following Kumarakuruparar has maintained its own identity and four successors from Kumarakuruparar headed the centre there. The sixth successor from Kumarakuruparar, Tillainayakattampiran, (1720-56) built an outpost of the Kasi Matha at Tiruppanantal, which is known as the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal, indicating that it is an outpost of the original centre at Kasi. The leadership of the line has continued from Tiruppanantal from the time of Tillainayakattampiran to the present day.

A crisis in succession occurred in 1853 when Ganapatittampiran, the head of the Kasi Matha lineage died. He had nominated a successor from among the tampiran at Tiruvavatuturai, but the head of Dharmapuram's lineage claimed right to nominate the successor at Tiruppanantal. Claim over the properties Tiruppanantal controlled was at the root of the dispute. Extensive litigation lasting more than twenty years and drawing on more than 2000 exhibits and 150 witnesses resulted. The litigation has been summarized in "Giyana Sambandha Pandara Sannadhi vs Kandasami Tambiran", The Indian Law Review vol. 10, Madras, 1887, pp. 375-508, which provides a history of the relationship between the institutions at Tiruppanantal and Dharmapuram. Evidence produced indicated that the heads of the Kasi Matha both prior and subsequent to the establishment of the centre at Tiruppanantal had appointed their own successors (pp. 397, 404, 423, and elsewhere). From at least the mid-eighteenth century onwards, these nominations had been made from among the tampiran at Dharmapuram.

Evidence introduced by Dharmapuram (pp. 402, 425, 429 and elsewhere) indicated that the lineages members at Tiruppanantal and other places where the Kasi Matha had interests maintained a close relationship with the head of the Dharmapuram Adhinam. The court deemed this relationship to constitute a guru-disciple relationship, on the basis of terms of respect and obeisance used in communiques from the tampiran of Tiruppanantal to the head of Dharmapuram. Material presented by Dharmapuram was also used to argue that while the heads of the Kasi Matha lineage might have nominated successors, only the heads of Dharmapuram had the power to consecrate (pp. 420, 432), or validate the nomination, through the administration of mantra kashayam

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In the religious language of Saiva Siddhanta, it is the manifestation of a guru at a site that begins the line of descent. This understanding of guru and lineage suggests an appropriation of the Tamil attitude towards Siva whose presence is known in connection with his appearance at different temple sites. Terms used to describe the daily activities of the preceptor come from the vocabulary of temple ritual; thus when the head of the lineage is served food, he is offered naivediyam, the food offering made to a temple deity. Kurumakacannitanam (the "great presence of the guru")[117], the form of address used for the velala preceptors today, further reflects this identification with Siva.[118]

(investiture of mantra). Other evidence produced by both sides dealt with the issue of trusteeship of the properties maintained by the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal for the purposes of religious charities executed in Kasi and in South India.

The final ruling on the case (pp. 495-508) was a compromise resolution. The court upheld that the institution headquartered at Tiruppanantal was an independent institution, in control of its own succession rights and property, but that its unique relationship with the Dharmapuram Adhinam created a right in which the Dharmapuram Adhinam had an interest in the succession at Tiruppanantal. That succession should take place from among the tampiran of Dharmapuram who were deemed competent to discharge the duties of the management of the affairs of the Kasi Matha at Tiruppanantal, and though nominated by the head of the Kasi Matha, would be finalized by investiture by the head of the Dharmpuram Adhinam. This case was a British jurist's nightmare, as it required knowledge of spiritual lineage patterns in South India as well as familiarity with endowments for religious and charitable purposes, and understanding of property and revenue rights. The final ruling acknowledges the establishment of branch lineages through ties with specific localities, but it subsumes the independence of these branch lineages under a broader spiritual hereditary relationship.

117 The term is usually written as Gurumahasannidhanam in the centres' English publications.

118 Glenn Yocum, "Wisdom Made Visible", a paper presented at the 1987 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, discusses this point.

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The identification of the heads of the velala lineages with Siva has further ramifications. As Carol Breckenridge has pointed out,[119] temple deities are sovereign figures; they reside in palace temples (koyil), they are referred to as universal lord (svami) or sovereign (iraivan), they are served by a royal court of temple servants, the insignia of umbrella, sceptre, and so on affirm their kingship. Their dominion extends over the temple, which is much more than the buildings and the area of land covered by the temple complex. It is the collectivity of endowments which maintain the temple's activities, and the ensuing network of gift and redistribution.

As Breckenridge notes,[120] the deities rest in stone figures, and thus their domain of authority devolves upon a number of groups and agencies who are participants in the temple processes. In pre-modern Hindu India,[121] these groups, which included the spiritual lineages I am concerned with, shared in the supervision and management of the ritual process (with its concommitant revenue sharing); none had total and final control in bureaucratic sense. Breckenridge calls this pattern a "complex web of interlocking zones of authority...defined largely by the structure of endowments."[122]

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[119] Carol Breckenridge, "The Sri Minaksi Temple", pp. 127-140.

[120] Ibid., p. 134.

[121] Since 1863 (Act XX of 1863), there has been a movement towards a centralization of temple management, as a result of the combination of the British government's decision to disengage itself from the administration of Hindu institutions and the government's interpretations of how temple affairs were managed.

[122] Ibid., p. 139.

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As we know from the numerous grants naming members of the velala spiritual lineages to oversee the management of an endowment, these lineages were participants in this complex web of authority. Often mediating between endower and endowee,[123] the heads of the velala lineages were entitled to share (or co-opt) the symbols of sovereignty associated with the temple tradition. These symbols are still displayed today. When Dharmapuram's kurumakacannitanam leaves his matam to go to the temple, a guard brandishing a sword clears the way for him; he is accompanied by a tampiran who carries an umbrella over his head; other servants of the matam fan him. For important events he is carried in a palanquin. He holds court, seated on his pitam (throne or seat of the guru). The symbols presented by the head of Tiruvavatuturai when he goes out on procession are likewise regal.

Moreover, the use of these symbols is more than simply figurative. The domains of both of these spiritual lineages extend beyond the walls of their matas. The head of the lineage presides over a substantial land base obtained through endowments such as those mentioned[124] above. The zone of authority of any of these lineages, though identified with a particular site, is not localized; it constitutes a horizontally-linked "sub-kingdom" that cuts across geopolitical regions. This zone of authority traditionally operated in areas mediating the sovereignty resting with the deity of the temple

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[123] See n. 112 above, which discusses the role of agent assigned to the lineage members.

[124] See notes 108-112.

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and that resting with the state and was articulated in a pattern that replicates the characteristics shared by both deity and sovereign.

Pantaracanniti

Pantaracanniti, another title of the office of leadership of the lineage, characterizes this zone of authority occupied by the velala lineages. Canniti, an equivalent of cannitanam, again means sacred or holy presence; pantaram (Skt. bhandaran) has the meaning of treasure, as well as public treasury or repository. In Cola and other inscriptions, wealth endowed to a temple was deposited in the temple's pantaram.[125] In inscriptions from the fourteenth century onwards, pantaram is a term used for functionaries who seem to have been involved in overseeing some of the financial affairs of the temple, which related to the collection and management of revenue from land endowed for special temple services (kattalai).[126] From terms used in conjunction with pantaram in the epigraphical evidence,[127] it appears that the pantara were ascetics, or

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[125] For example, A.R.E. no. 541 of 1919. See also discussion in Cu. Ponnusamy, Sri Thyagaraja Temple at Tiruvarur (Madras, 1971), p. 55.

[126] See descriptions in notes 108-112, above. These endowments were not always well-managed. A copper-plate inscription (C.P. no. 9 of A.R.E. 1937-37) dated saka 1644 states that a grant made for a kattalai and left in charge of the periya pantaram and cinna pantaram (the head pantaram and his immediate subordinate) was mismanaged, so the lands were restored to the donor to ensure the proper conduct of the charities.

[127] An inscription from Avutaiyarkoil (A.R.E. no. 503 of 1925-26, dated saka 1524) records a sale of land through the agent of Paradecimanttira Vamateva Pantaram, for the requirements of worship to the deity of the temple. Here the term paradeci indicates either ascetic status or someone from another locality. Paradeci is a common

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members of spiritual lineages. Through this usage, I suggest that the collection of revenue involved and the agent in superintendence, a member of a spiritual lineage, collapsed into the one term pantaram.[128]

The term pantaracanniti, as related to the centres at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, appears in epigraphical evidence,[129] legal documents,[130] and other material, though the centres' traditional accounts of their histories do not use the term. Even those accounts published at the same time as court records and newspaper articles which identified the heads of the centres as pantaracanniti preferred terms such as kurumakacannitanam, nanatecikar, and nanacariya.[131] Likewise, I can think of no occasion when I heard anyone associated with the centres, either as an employee within the matam or as a follower of the lineage, use the term pantaracanniti to refer to the head; for them, the head of the lineage is kurumakacannitanam. I have also never

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term for non-brahmin ascetics today. Another inscription from the same year (no. 504) records a gift of land to the same pantaram for his gurupuja indicating membership in a spiritual lineage.

[128] Another inscription (A.R.E. no. 505 of 1925-26, dated saka 1524) from Avutaiyarkoil highlights this connection between the agent and the treasury. It records that a gift was made to Vamatevapantaram, who was doing tiruppani (service) to the sripantaram (treasury) of the temple, towards a gurupuja service to be performed by him.

[129] See material discussed in notes 108-112, above.

[130] See, for example, "Giyana Sambanda Pandara Sannadhi vs. Kandasami Tambiran" I.L.R. 10 Madras; "Dharmapuram Pandara Sannadhi vs. Virapandiyam Pillai" I.L.R. 22 Madras, pp. 302ff; and "Murugesan Pillai vs. Manikkavasaka Desika Gnana Sambandha Pandara Sannadhi" I.L.R. 40 Madras, pp. 402-408.

[131] The Kuruparamparai Vilakkam was published at the same time as the accounts in The Hindu, which I discuss below, yet the term pantaracanniti nowhere appears in this text.

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encountered pantaram or pantaracanniti in any of the centres' poetics that I have read. Outside the institution, however, pantaracanniti is commonly used, even today.

I can only speculate on why kurumakacannitanam and similar titles are preferred by the hagiographic accounts and by individuals attached to the centres. Pantaram, as a title, depicts the administrative roles assumed by these lineages, whereas kurumakacannitanam identifies a religious preceptor. As the hagiographical accounts emphasize the transmission of teachings and wisdom, and only allude to the roles the centres played in the administration of kattalai (temple endowments), the term kurumakacannitanam is appropriate. The same goes for followers of the lineage; the head of the lineage is their preceptor, and not simply a bureaucrat. Here pantaram is out of context, for though it can suggest a repository of wisdom as well as money, pantaram has historically been used in conjunction with an administrative office. This appearance of two types of terms to label the head of the lineage may thus reflect the combination of two very different historical functions.

I should also note that the term pantaram is used for members of a low caste grouping who are traditionally involved in the maintenance of goddess shrines.[132] These low caste pantaram sometimes officiate as

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[132] Michael Moffat, An Untouchable Caste in South India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 96 and 263.

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low-caste priests, serving an even lower caste clientele.[133] This usage may have contributed to the apparent disinclination of members of the velala centres to claim this title nowadays; at present only Tiruvavatuturai uses the title pantaracanniti in official documents and letterhead.

Preceptor-Disciple Relationship

The Saiva velala lineages are based on a preceptor-disciple relationship which resembles the kin-based relationships that are fundamental to Indian society. For the velala centres, the lineages imitate a patrilineal form in which it resembles a family unit made up of a father and his sons. The preceptor, or head of the lineage, is the father, while the disciples, known as tampiran, are the sons. The disciples, or "sons", must be "born" into the family, hence they undergo an initiation which serves as their birth[134] into the lineage. There are also "collateral" affiliates of the lineage, lay people who have been administered one or more of the rites of initiation, but for whom the rites admit only limited ritual privilege in association with the

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[133] The use of non-Brahmin ritual specialists by major peasant castes is reported by K. Ramachandran, "Vadamalaipuram, Ramnad District", in Gilbert Slater, ed., Some South Indian Villages (Madras: University of Madras, 1918), p. 32 and R. Caldwell, The Tinnevelly Shanars: A Sketch of their Religion and Moral Condition, and Characteristics as a Caste (Madras: The Christian Knowledge Society, 1850).

[134] These forms of initiation are discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

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lineage, and not membership in it in a strict sense.[135] In this procedure the Saiva velala lineages are not unique, nor certainly are such preceptor-disciple lineages unique to the centres at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram. Such sampradaya, or teaching traditions, were the hallmark of medieval Hinduism.

Succession in the spiritual lineages of the velala centres is not determined by a rule of primogeniture. The most elder of the tampiran, either in actual age or in length of time served as a tampiran, will not automatically inherit the leadership of the lineage upon the preceptor's passing away. Instead, the preceptor appoints a successor in whom he has recognized the essential qualities of preceptorhood. In following this general principle of nomination, the velala lines of descent adher to one of several types of succession[136] found among spiritual lineages.

Disruption of Tradition

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[135] This material will also be developed below.

[136] P. R. Ganapathy Iyer, The Law Relating to Hindu and Mohameddan Endowments (Madras: Modern Printing Works, 2nd ed., 1918), p. 271, lists three classes of matas, viz., maurasi, or hereditary office, in which a successor is nominated by the previous mahant, or head; panchayati, or elective, in which a successor is elected by the group of disciples; and hakim, or personal heir, in which head of matam is a married householder and succession follows the principle of primogeniture. At the time he was writing, some institutions, such as the Naduvilai matam on the West coast of India, based their succession rights on a principle of seniority among the initiated disciples (p. 663): "the person who has been ordained earliest or who has been the longest in the sannyasin mode of life, becomes entitled to succeed."

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The histories of the lineages both of Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram suggest some divergence from this rule of succession. There have been occasions when succession has not gone easily. I will provide one example from Tiruvavatuturai. The 1962 account of the lineage[137] gives few details of the succession from the 17th head, Sri Ampalavanatecikar to the 19th, Sri Vaittiyalinkatecikar. It notes that Sri Ampalavanatecikar died in 1920 and was succeeded by Sri Cuppiramaniyatecikar, who had spent much time with Sri Ampalavanatecikar in otukkam, the hall of seclusion where the seat of the guru is located. There, according to the account, Sri Cuppiramaniyatecikar was given the seal of office by Sri Ampalavanatecikar. The account then observes that Sri Cuppiramaniyatecikar only graced the office for a short period as he passed away in 1922. Following him came Sri Vaittiyalinkatecikar, who was proficient in mantra and oratory. After managing the atinam's affairs in the south, he was nominated by Sri Cuppiramaniyatecikar in 1922. He remained in office until 1937.

Contemporary records[138] of the changes in office fill in some of the details. Prior to his death Sri Ampalavanatecikar was embroiled in a lawsuit related to the management of the temple at Tiruvitaimarutur.[139] The suit was instituted by a nattukottai cettiyar, Ramanathan Chetti, who had sponsored extensive renovations in the

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[137] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, pp. 142-44.

[138] Hindu, June 14, 1923, p. 4; February 9,1922, p. 3; and May 7, 1920, p. 11.

[139] Hindu, February 9, 1922, p. 3.

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temple and had been instrumental in securing Sri Ampalavanatecikar's appointment as temple manager. Ramanathan Chetti had also made a large contribution towards a kumbhabhisekam at Tiruvitaimarutur with the understanding that Sri Ampalavanatecikar would perform it.[140] The pantaracanniti did undertake the rite, but in so doing, he managed to insult members of the nattukottai cettiyar community by placing restrictions on their admittance into the inner precincts of the temple.

This insult led to Ramanathan Chetti's lawsuit against Sri Ampalavanatecikar. The suit sought to displace Sri Ampalavanatecikar as sole trustee of the temple. A tampiran, Vaittiyanatattampiran was also named as a defendant of the suit, as he held the office of the tampiran who had direct superintendence over the income of the temple. At the same time, a group of tampiran of Tiruvavatuturai filed a suit against Sri Ampalavanatecikar to wrest control over the temporal affairs of the atinam from the pantaracanniti and place it, instead, with a board of trustees under a revised constitution. The filing of this suit resulted in the appointment of the pantaracanniti as the receiver of the atinam, answerable to the court for its financial administration.[141]

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[140] The performance of the kumbhabhisekam by the head of one of the velala lineages is symbolic of his role as overseer of the temple's affairs. The head of the lineage pours the consecrated abhisekam over the top of the temple's vimana at the same time as temple priests reconsecrate the images in the temple's inner sancta. I witnessed Tiruvavatuturai's kurumakacannitanam undertake a kumbhabhisekam at a temple outside of Trichy in 1984.

[141] The case was eventually resolved in 1935 with the recognition of the pantaracanniti as the ex-officio trustee both of the endowments designated for kattalais, choultries, and other specific purposes and of

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While the proceedings of Ramanathan Chetti's suit were pending, the pandaracanniti died in suspicious circumstances, whereupon Vaitiyanatattampiran produced a will and claimed to have been nominated as successor. One week after Vaittiyanatattampiran was installed as head of the atinam with the title of Sri Cuppiramaniyatecikar, Namaccivayattampiran, who had been attached to the centre for a long time, proclaimed himself to be the head, supporting his claim to the title on the basis of election by the group of tampiran. To further his claim, Namaccivaya had himself ordained by the head of the Suriyanarkoil Atinam, arguing that the spiritual affinity between Tiruvavatuturai and Suriyanarkoil legitimated his right to succession.

Namaccivaya also maintained that he was able to escape only with great difficulty from Tiruvavatuturai, and that his rival's followers had earlier intercepted a message from Sri Ampalavanatecikar appointing him as successor. Namaccivaya claimed that his rival had barricaded himself in the matam at Tiruvavatuturai and allowed his followers to loot it in order to purchase their loyalty. Namaccivaya filed his claim for title of head of Tiruvavatuturai with the sub-court in Mayuram and took up office in exile at Suriyanarkoil.[142]

Sri Cuppiramaniyatecikar (Vaittiyanatampiran) held office for only two years short two months. As in the case of his predecessor, foul play was suspected as the cause of death, and again the transfer of

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the general endowments made to the atinam itself (Hindu, August 8, 1935, p. 14).

[142] Hindu, May 7, 1920, p. 11.

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power was met with some opposition.[143] Vaittiyalinkattampiran, who had been nominated as the junior pantaracanniti, was ready to assume office, but followers of Namaccivaya gathered in front of the matam just as the body of Sri Cuppiramaniyatecikar was to be interred. The crowd, estimated in newspaper reports at 10,000, was there to block burial until Namaccivaya secured the seat of the atinam. When the police arrived a riot was going on which was stopped only after police fired into the crowd killing three and wounding eight people. Sri Cuppiramaniyatecikar was buried; Vaittiyalinkattampiran assumed office as Sri Vaittiyalinkatecikar, and Namaccivayatampiran's claim to the office dissolved upon his death some years later.

Tiruvavatuturai is not the only centre to have experienced such intrigue over the issue of succession in this century.[144] Contemporary reports from Dharmapuram indicate much the same was going on. On October 29, 1923, the police were notified that the head of Dharmapuram had been found dead.[145] They arrived in the middle of the funeral ceremonies and halted them to have a doctor examine the body. When signs of asphyxiation were found, Ratnasabhapati Pantaram and six others were arrested. The judge acquitted Ratnasabhapati Pantaram, but sentenced four others to death. In the course of time it was revealed that Ratnasabhapati had a grudge against the pantaracanniti and aspired

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[143] Hindu, February 9, 1922, p. 3.

[144] K. Sivaraman, personal communication, points out that such troubles are commonplace even at the Sankaracarya centres at Sringeri and Kanchipuram.

[145] Hindu, March 4, 1925, p. 10.

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to assume his office.

These reports tell us these centres have experienced disruption of tradition. Personal rivalry and competition over control of resources both have contributed to this disruption when it has occurred. The examples I have cited took place in the earlier part of this century, but there may well be other incidences hidden in the lineage histories. A story from Tiruvavatuturai possibly hints to this effect. During the period of the fourth kurumakacannitanam, Icanattampiran was administered the rite of acaryabhisekam, but before he could assume office, he entered into eternal camati on the outskirts of settlement around the matam and there his body was devoured by jackals.[146]

Election

When Namaccivayattampiran of Tiruvavatuturai unsuccessfully evoked a rule of election in 1922, he further attempted to legitimate his claim by receiving unction (acaryabhisekam) from the head of the Suriyanarkoil Atinam. The centrality of abhisekam in the rite of succession is not insignificant. Very recently Dharmapuram has employed a rule of election, which it also validated by abhisekam. The twenty-fifth preceptor and predecessor of the present kurumakecannitanam passed away unexpectedly[147] and without having nominated a successor,

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[146] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, pp. 49-50.

[147] People attached to the Dharmapuram Adhinam today feel that the twenty-fifth kurumakecannitanam knew that his time of departure was coming. They explain that he unexpectedly changed his plans so as to

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while on pilgrimage to Kasi in 1972 Rumours still circulate as to exactly what happened,[148] but the public account is that the tampiran of the institution gathered together at Dharmapuram in the hall facing the cell where the image of Cokkanata, the personal deity of Dharmapuram's founder and the tutelar of the lineage is located. From this gathering the present kurumakecannitanam emerged as the new leader. His right to office, initially derived from election by the tampiran, was validated in an abhisekam performed in the Jnanapurisvara temple at Dharmapuram. In a rite undertaken by the sivacarya who maintains the shrine, the present kurumakecannitanam received the unction that flowed from the linga that is said to mark the camati of Kurunanacampantar. As it is believed that Kurunanacampantar "still dwells in this temple and continues to guide the successive heads of the Adhinam",[149] Dharmapuram's present kurumakecannitanam received the seal of office from this abhisekam.

The traditional history of Kurunanacampantar, as it is told today,[150] provides precedent for this procedure. As the account goes, Kurunanacampantar had appointed Anantaparavasa as successor, and then

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leave for pilgrimage earlier than planned in order to be in Kasi at the moment of death. His body was flown back to Madras and then interred in a camati at Dharmapuram, though there are some who feel that the removal of the body from Kasi was improper.

[148] Apparently Arunantittampiran of the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal, the predecessor of the present head of the Kasi Matha, played a role in the negotiations that went on. He is said to have mediated rival claims to the advantage of the present kurumahacannitanam.

[149] Mu. Arunacalam, Guru Jnana Sambandhar, p. 58.

[150] Ibid., pp. 55-58.

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entered eternal camati, but Anantaparavasa, instead of assuming office, did the same to the west of the matam. The tampiran thus gathered at the camati of Kurunanacampantar and prayed:

> Oh Lord, now that Anandaparavasa your nominee has also entered eternal bliss, what is to become of us? We pray, you appear again to help us, and to ensure a proper succession to the headship of Dharmapuram, and name a competent spiritual guru for us.[151]

At this, Kurunanacampantar came out of camati and anointed another disciple, Catcitananta, now counted as the third in the line.

It is traditional that Dharmapuram (and Tiruvavatuturai) release a publication to commemorate the annual anniversary of the founder's camati which is celebrated in an elaborate gurupuja ceremony. The account of the first succession at Dharmapuram that I have just quoted was part of a publication about Kurunanacampantar, written in English, that was released in 1972, when the present kurumakecannitanam performed his first gurupuja after his assumption of office.[152] According to the provisions of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act,[153] demonstration of adherence to what is known as

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[151] Ibid., p. 56.

[152] Ibid., p. iv.

[153] According to The Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1959 (Tamil Nadu Act 22 of 1959) (Coimbatore: 1983), VI:13, p. 11, a matam's reason for existing is to perpetuate its religious tradition. If there is a breakdown of usage, a matam abrogates its purpose and thus forfeits its autonomy. Once there is proof of the lapse of tradition, the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board then can make a move to bring the matam's functions, such as the administration of temples, under its control (V:58, pp. 57-58). Obviously with the wealth that centres like Dharmapuram control

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established usage, or tradition, allows centres such as Dharmapuram some degree of autonomy. Usage is obtained when the centre continues to function as its traditions indicate it has always done.

Proof of strict adherence to tradition is difficult at the best of times, for the assumption behind the Hindu Religious Charitable Endowments Act is that nothing does - or should change. Skillful interpretation of the lineage's past as revealed through the hagiographic literature it has produced has in the past[154] helped establish what tradition has been. Still the danger of abrogation of tradition and thus the loss of continued autonomy is always present. The present kurumakecannitanam's claim to office, though unusual, was not, as the account released in the same year as he took office demonstrates, without precedent and a powerful one at that. Yet, what is perhaps most remarkable about this account is the centrality of abhisekam in the claim to sit in the seat of the guru and head the institution. By the very logic of what holds the lineage together, elected office alone cannot support the head of the lineage; that support devolves from the receipt of abhisekam. Notwithstanding

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in the form of lands and endowments, there is much more at stake than spiritual concerns. Certain progressive politicians see centres like Dharmapuram as useless - and parasitic - relics of the past. The board has at present begun court action to remove the head of the Jnansambandar Adhinam of Madurai, a centre similar to Dharmapuram, from office. This suit is based on an allegation of immorality, behaviour incompatible with the position of matatipati, or head of a religious centre.

[154] See I.L.R. 10 Madras, pp. 358-508, and note 116 above, for discussion of the controversy between Dharmapuram and Tiruppanantal over Tiruppanantal's succession that took place last century.

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instances in which attempts to invoke a rule of election have been made, the rules governing rights of succession and nomination are quite complex and are intimately associated with the Saivite initiations - samayadiksa, visesadiska, nirvanadiksa, and acaryabhisekam. Why abhisekam holds the key to office will become clearer in the next chapter when I discuss what happens when abhisekam is administered.

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CHAPTER TWO

Internal Organization of Lineage

The religious brotherhoods of Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram, and Tiruppanantal are sharply defined in ritual terms. This chapter explores these ritual terms, by reviewing the rites of initiation that admit members into the velala lineages.

The Saiva Initiations

As we have seen in the last chapter, the traditions of the Saiva centres have undergone some disruption in recent years, yet underneath the changes that have occurred is a pattern of internal organization based on a complex of rituals known as the Saiva initiations, samayadiksa, visesadiksa, nirvanadiksa, and acaryabhisekam. These initiations are rooted in the Agamic tradition known through Sanskrit manuals (paddhati texts) and Tamil summaries of the Sanskrit material.[155] Appearing around the tenth century in South India, the

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[155] See Jean Filliozat, "Les Agamas Civaites", in N.R. Bhatt, Rauravagama, vol. I (Pondichery: 1961) and Carl Gustav Diehl, Instrument and Purpose. Studies on Rites and Rituals in South India (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1956), pp. 42-65, for a discussion of the contents of different Agamas. Mu. Arunacalam, "The Saiva Paddhati", in Saivasiddhanta, vol. II, 1967, outlines the origin and range of the paddhati texts. By far the best discussion of the Agamic initiations

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paddhati texts were manuals that outlined the rites featured in the carya and kriya padas of the saivagamas and upagamas (secondary agamas).[156] Typical paddhati material[157] covered the rules of personal hygiene and purification, the rites of sivapuja and the maintenance of the sacred fire, special rules for worship on various ceremonial occasions, the Saivite initiations (Skt. diksa), the consecration of images and temples, the way to conduct temple festivals, ceremonies to ancestors, propitiation, restoration of temples, appeasement, and gifts (dana). A large concentration of these Sanskrit texts was compiled in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, and manuals were still being compiled in the late sixteenth century when the lines at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram were founded.[158] Civakkiriyokikal of Suriyanarkoil, who was a contemporary and close associate - if the hagiographic accounts are accurate[159] - of Namaccivaya of

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appears in the notes and comments by Helene Brunner-Lachaux in her translation of the Somasambhupaddhati. Troisieme Partie Rituels occasionnels dans la tradition sivaite de l'Inde du Sud selon Somasambhu. II: diksa, abhiseka, vratoddhara, antyesti, sraddha (Pondichery: Institut francais d'Indologie, 1977). Without her work, my understanding of the ritual cycle of the velala centres would have been far weaker.

[156] Mu Arunacalam, "Saiva Paddhati", pp. 10-11, and Diehl, Instrument and Purpose, pp. 51-52. See also Jan Gonda, Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), pp. 213-15.

[157] See chart listing dates and compilers of major paddhati texts in Mu. Arunacalam, "Saiva Paddhati", p. 15.

[158] Jan Gonda, Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit, p. 215, speaks of paddhati texts still being produced as late as the eighteenth century.

[159] See Chapter Four, below.

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Tiruvavatuturai, compiled several manuals, including the Saivasannyasa paddhati and the Sivagrapaddhati which outline ritual procedures still followed in the centres today.[160]

The Tamil manuals, which appeared later than the Sanskrit paddhatis, were not only based on the material from Agamic sources, but also restricted to that material; as Helene Brunner-Lachaux points out,[161] even the most recent of these ritual manuals make no reference to the Tamil Tirumurai, the poetic works considered canonical by the Saiva Siddhantins. Members of the lineages at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram produced examples of such ritual manuals,[162] as well as poetic reflections of the experiences these rites bring about.[163] This latter type of work involves expression reminiscent of religious sentiments of the Tirumurai. Examples of the latter works have become

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[160] Sivagrayogin [Civakkirayokikal], Saivasannyasapaddhati (grantha edition), edited by Sri Ramasastri and Narayanasastri (Kumbhakonan:1932). The introduction to this text lists some of Civakkirayokikal's other works.

[161] Helene Brunner-Lachaux, "Introduction", Somasambhupaddhati. Le rituel quotidien dans la tradition sivaite de l'Inde du Sud selon Somasambhu. Premiere Partie. Traduction Introduction et Notes (Pondicher 1963), p. iii.

[162] The preceptor of Kurunanacampantar, Kamalai Nanappirakacar, produced several of these works, such as the Civapucai akaval, and the Piracatamalai. Velappatecikar of Tiruvavatuturai compiled the Nanapucai viti. Dharmapuram today relies on the Civapucai viti (Dharmapuram: 1953).

[163] Kurunanacampantar's Civapoka Caram (Dharmapuram: 1971) is a moving example of the blissful experience of initiation from a spiritual preceptor. Many of the works (Pantara Cattiram, Mulam, Tiruvavatuturai: 1979) of Ampalavanatecikar of Tiruvavatuturai praise the wisdom learned through the ritual teachings. See the listing of works of the two centres' Pantara Cattiram in Appendix B for further examples. These works of the Pantara Cattiram show the influence of the Tirumurai.

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part of the centres' poetic canons.

This textual material, and the rites of initiation it outlines, define ritual competence, the features of which were inherited by the velala lineages from earlier preceptors, working both in Sanskrit and Tamil media. Though the velala lineages' teachings derive final and unique form from what is transmitted personally from guru to disciple (or from kurumakacannitanam to tampiran), the manner of transmission through initiation, and indeed the rites that are central to the lineages' workings are Agamic-based. The internal structure of the velala lineages is based on the Agamic concept of ritual competence; hence, to understand fully the nature of the lineages in their most fundamental sense, we need to look carefully at the logic of the Saivite initiations that informs the very being of the religious brotherhoods.

I will first provide a brief overview of the rites as they are defined textually, then I will turn to their place in the velala lineages. In the material which follows on the ritual processes of initiation, worship, and succession as related to the lineages of Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, I am going to focus my discussion mainly on what occurs within the institution located at Dharmapuram. I have three reasons for this focus. First, it simplifies the writing, by allowing me to avoid sentences made cumbersome with references to both centres. Second, I will discuss some of Tiruvavatuturai's rites in greater detail below in chapters on Tirumalikaittevar, mahesvarapuja, and gurupuja.

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Finally and most importantly, Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram share the same Agamic patterns of lineage rites. What conclusions I draw about Dharmapuram's ritual sequence pertain to Tiruvavatuturai's, and tc that of other similar institutions in Tamilnadu. There are areas of divergence between Tiruvavatuturai's and Dharmapuram's practices which I have already summarized in part in the introduction; where important for the discussion here, I will draw attention to the differences between practices of the two centres.

The Saivite Initiations

As Helene Brunner-Lachaux has observed,[164] the number of three initiations is not universal among Agamic works. The tradition of the velala lineages, however, is based cn the schema of three initiations, samaya, visesa and nirvana diksa, with a special fourth rite acaryabhiseka administered to those destined to become preceptors.[165] The function of the linear arrangement of the three rites is to bring about a transformation in the individual, who by the receipt of nirvanadiksa - the initiation - shares an identity with Siva. In addition to this not insignificant result, nirvanadiksa has one other effect. The individual who has received nirvanadiksa becomes fully qualified to undertake worship of Siva: "to adore Siva, one must become

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[164] Helene Brunner-Lachaux, "Introduction", Somasambhupaddhati. Troisieme Partie, p. xxx.

[165] See the lineage accounts in Guruparamparai Vilakkam, passim., and Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam.

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Siva".[166] The shared identity with Siva is most fully realized in the on-going consecration of the ritual process.

With nirvana diksa as the culminating and transforming rite, samaya and visesa diksa are both preliminary and preparatory. Samaya diksa brings the individual into the community of Saivites; once one has received it, the initiate has gained the right of entrance into the Saiva way. Visesa diksa, a later and somewhat artificial division according to Brunner-Lachaux,[167] marks the transition between entry into the way and ultimate transformation. To use terms suggested by Brunner-Lachaux,[168] the station of the samayin is characterized by servitude to the guru, to the prescriptions and proscriptions of the tradition, to the Saivite scriptures, and to the rites one observes, but is not yet qualified to undertake. The nirvanadiksita is the child of Siva, by virtue of the transformative second birth brought about by the rite.

The procedure followed during the initiation rites is infinitely more complex than suggested in the summaries which

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[166] Helene Brunner-Lachaux, Somasambhupaddhati. Premiere Partie, p. 130, n.3. She cites common Agamic phrases, "Il faut devinir Siva pour adorer Siva (sivibhuya sivam yajet), "seul Siva peut adorer Siva" (nasivassivama

[167] ibid., "Introduction", Somasambhupaddhati. Troisieme Partie, p. xxxv. She calls this initiation,"un rite batard, tardivement constitue en rituel independent et alourdi de phases qui appartiennent en propre a la nirvanadiksa."

[168] ibid., p. xxxiii.

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follow.[169] As it is described in the manuals of Somasambhu and those who followed Somasambhu's tradition, which included the velala lineages, samaya diksa is the rite in which the guru purifies and begins the consecration of the individual. After the guru has consecrated himself within a sacred diagram (mandala) he has created, and resacralized his identity with Siva through the mantras he learned from his preceptor, he brings the blind-folded initiate into the consecrated space his devotions have created, marking the initiate's entry into the tradition. There the initiate is fully purified and his or her body is transformed into a "body of mantra" by the touch of the guru, who is actually Siva acting through the guru. The blind-fold is then lifted and the initiate is presented before Siva who is present within the sacred space created during the ritual. At this same time, the guru lets a flower fall; where it drops within the mandala determines the individual's diksa name.

In the second rite, the initiate's soul (atman) is prepared, so that the initiate can be reborn as child of Siva.[170] This rite also takes place within a mandala created and sacralized by the guru's preliminary rites. Somasambhu speaks of a fire reminiscent of the Vedic fire kindled within the mandala, into which oblations are made. Through

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[169] I have closely followed the comments of Helene Brunner-Lachaux, ibid., pp. xxx-xlv and her translations and notes in the sections of diksa.

[170] ibid., p. xxxi. The texts use the term putra. This conception of "second birth" is the Agamic version of dvija; Agamic material maintains that the Vedic upanayana concerns the body, whereas the Agamic second birth concerns the soul.

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the response of the flames, the guru is able to read the initiate's character. In the Saivasannyasapaddhati, a manual concerned only with the initiated Saiva ascetic's personal rites, Civakkirayoki speaks solely of a fire internally kindled by the guru. After consecrating the initiate as before, the guru draws out the initiate's soul and places it in the womb of Vagisvari (here representing the active force of Siva) who is installed in the internal fire by the guru's invocations. The atman of the initiate is thus conceived and reborn from this womb of Siva's grace, and then returned to the initiate's body by the guru. After this rebirth has taken place, the disciple is instructed in the tradition and told of the ritual obligations that an initiate must fulfill from that time onwards. This rite, like samaya diksa, marks a period of circumscribed behaviour and study, similar to the Vedic stage of brahmacarya.[171]

Though visesa diksa anticipates the events of nirvana diksa, it and samaya diksa are but preparations for nirvanadiksa, the central rite. As described in the paddhati texts, nirvana diksa should be performed over the course of two days, which rarely occurs at present.[172] After performing the same preparations and purifications as undertaken in the earlier initiations, the guru charges the initiate with mantra, preparing the individual for the changes to occur. Using

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[171] ibid., p. xxxvi.

[172] Christopher J. Fuller, Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple (Cambridge: 1984), p. 29, points out that among the temple priests of the Sri Minaksi temple, all three initiations are performed in a cluster, as preliminary to acaryabhiseka.

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the media of mantra, the guru draws out the initiate's soul (atman) and removes from it the binding obstructions (pasa).[173] The guru then joins the initiate's atman with his own which through his preparations is pervaded with Siva's essence. This union and ensuing acts of the guru give rise to a new, completely pure body created out of subtle elements that is able to fully experience the joining with the essence of Siva.[174] The guru gives the pancaksara (om namaccivaya, known by the Saiva Siddhantins as the root mantra) to the initiate, who is transformed and united with Siva.

Thus having brought about this charging of the initiate's soul with the essence of Siva, the guru returns it to the disciple's ordinary body. The guru then presents the initiate with a personal linga[175] and leads the disciple through the rite of sivapuja, which shares with the initiation rites the same invocations, offerings and use of mantra. To

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[173] The concept of pasa, or bonds weighing down the soul (atman in the paddhati texts, but pasu (Tamil pacu) in Tamil works) is a key concept in Saiva Siddhanta. According to Saiva Siddhanta, there are three eternal entities, pati, pacu and pacam (God, soul and matter). The soul encumbered by pacam is in the state of bondage; rid of this bondage the soul is liberated to be joined with, but not absorbed in, God. Devotion itself does not rid the soul of bondage, but it prepares it for the descent of God's grace which liberates the soul. See V. Davamony, Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta.

[174] Somasambhupaddhati. Troisieme Partie, pp. 264-354.

[175] I am referring to ascetic initiates here. Civakkirayoikikal, Saivasannyasapaddhati, p. 75f., refers to the presentation of a personal image for worship. The Somasambhupaddhati. Troisieme Partie, pp. 413-19, speaks of instruction in worship, but does not make specific mention of a personal image. I do not know if this presentation of a personal linga occurs in the initiations given at present to temple priests.

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worship Siva, one must be one with Siva.[176] As evinced by this central initiation rite, the act cannot be separated from being; realization and ultimate transcendence find their expression in puja. To receive the rite of puja, one must be properly transformed.

The fourth rite, acaryabhiseka does not automatically follow nirvana diksa.[177] With nirvana diksa one can worship; nothing else is needed for the individual's liberation. Acaryabhiseka, however, ensures the continuity of the transmission, as it transforms the initiate into the preceptor. This rite involves ritual unction (abhiseka) of the preceptor-designate. Water in a large pot (kumbha) is charged with mantra and the power of Siva is invoked. As water is poured over ~~the~~ his head, the preceptor-designate, who had been united with Siva's essence in the earlier diksa, receives Siva's power.[178] This unction is followed with the presentation of the insignia of acarya (preceptor). These emblems include the same royal insignia, such as the umbrella and mirror, and offerings, such as flowers and lamps, that are presented to the deity during puja, as well as the insignia of the preceptor's office, such as signet ring and special rudraksa. The guru who conducts

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[176] See n. 166 above.

[177] Sanjukta Gupta, "Pancaratra Initiations" in Studies in Hindu Tantricism, points out that the early patterns of Pancaratra initiations recognize two separate categories of those whose goal is liberation, and those who are destined to become preceptors. The status of liberated individual (nirvanadiksita) need not be followed by preceptorhood.

[178] Helene Brunner-Lachaux, "Introduction", Somasambhupaddhati. Troisieme Partie, p. xliv: "Le disciple, qui avait acquis les Perfections de Siva lors de sa diksa, recoit grace a l'abhiseka une delegation speciale du Pouvoir du Dieu, dont il va dorenavant etre sur terre le representant autorise."

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this ceremony also instructs the new preceptor in the rites and responsibilities of the office.

These Agamic rites constitute the organizational principles of the spiritual lineages at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, but I should note that acaryabhiseka, as it is defined in Agamic works, is also what qualifies a temple priest to conduct puja in a Siva temple. Only an aticaiva (member of the temple priest caste grouping) who has received acaryabhiseka can perform public worship and consescrate others.[179] As will be demonstrated below, acaryabhiseka as administered within the velala lineages does not confer this right of public temple worship, though it does endow the recipient with similar rights within the context of the lineage.

Internal Organization of the Dharmapuram Adhinam

As administered by the Dharmapuram Adhinam, the three stages of initiation, samaya, visvesa and nirvana diksa govern the degree of access an initiate has to the rituals practiced by the Adhinam.[180] All the rituals pertain to puja (worship) and they range from personal puja, or the initiate's private worship of a personal linga bestowed by the preceptor, to daily puja at each of the Adhinam's camati sites, or

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[179] See C.J. Fuller, Servants of the Goddess, pp. 28f.

[180] My questions about the initiations at Dharmapuram were answered by kurumakacannitanam, and other individuals at the Adhinam. Tiruvavatuturai's kurumakacannitanam provided me with descriptions of the rites he received. The material which follows is based on these, and other descriptions. I was not priviledged to see any of the rites.

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shrines erected on the burial sites of the previous heads of the lineage, to the worship of Cokkanata, the form of Siva personally worshipped by Kurunanacampantar, the founder of Dharmapuram's line. Non-initiates may be able to witness the performance of some of the more "public" aspects of these rituals, such as a rite of worship at a camati, but a non-initiate cannot undertake any of these rites.

The initiations into the ritual practices of the Adhinam are administered by the head of the lineage (kurumakacannitanam) to both the ascetic members (tampiran), who make up the Adhinam's order, and lay members who frequent the Adhinam, but lead ordinary lives outside the Adhinam. The only, but hardly minor, qualifications that must be met by one seeking initiation is proper caste background and demonstration of sincere spiritual yearnings. Such yearnings are demonstrated, for example, by frequent attendance of the Adhinam's functions, a reputation for pious behaviour, and familiarity with the teachings of the Saiva Siddhanta tradition.

At present, initiates of the Adhinam come from five highly specific caste groupings (jati)[181] which are defined by kin ties and endogamous marriage networks. These five make up the so-called "Saiva" castes, pillai, tondaimantalam mutalaiyar, caiva cettiyar, karkattar velala, and the tecikar or otuvar group, all of which are considered by their members to be high-ranking, but non-Brahmin castes. The cettiyar group seems to be a late addition to the lineages' roster of eligible

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[181] This information comes from the head of Dharmapuram, Mu. Arunacalam and others.

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members, perhaps reflecting more recent group alliances. Whether the present exclusivity of membership has always been a hallmark of the institution's internal organization is difficult to gauge from the records available, but hagiographic accounts of the institution's line of preceptors make it clear that its leadership has always been in the hands of a broadly defined velala caste grouping. Today at Dharmapuram it is expected that the head of the lineage come from the karkattar velala grouping, as did Kurunanacampantar, the founder of the lineage.

The broad label velala covers these groupings with the exception of the caiva cettiyars. This term velala defines a broader social unit which indicates that the groups share general status and ritual concerns. Velala identity provides an extension of kin identity, as each of the five groups involved participate in endogamous marriage networks. Again with the exception of the cettiyars who define themselves as a merchant grouping and the otuvars whose traditional occupation relates to the singing of the Tirumurai in Saivite temples, these groups are largely of agrarian background.

Though there are variations in the settlement patterns of individual family clusters, these five caste groupings have strong regional identities. Members of the pillai grouping reside in large part in the Tanjavur and Tirunelveli regions; the tontaimantalam mutalaiyar originally come from the area near Kanchipuram, but there were large migrations into what is now the Ramnad district, including the area of Puttukottai. The cettiyars originate in the area around Madurai, karkattar velala are identified with both the Salem and Ramnad

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districts, and the tecikars or otuvars, like the pillai grouping, are concentrated in Tanjavur and Tirunelveli. Some of the spatial distribution of these related groups reflects migration patterns;[182] other factors that may have contributed to it are unknown to me at present. In this area, my data are incomplete.

The answer to why these groups were allied with the lineages found at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram is largely circular: because the lineages located at these sites are made up of members of this large velala grouping. Situated in the Kaveri basin, Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram and other centres were in the heartland of the ancient Cola kingdom. They were also part of the grid most heavily travelled by the most revered nayanmar, and, as I will show below in my discussions of Tirumular and Tirumalikaittevar, Tiruvavatuturai had a fairly long history as a sacred place for those of spiritual inclinations. These reasons may have made these sites especially valuable places to be identified with. However, why the extended velala kin groupings should foster spiritual lineages such as those located at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram raises another question. While I cannot answer this question entirely I will return to it at the end of this chapter when I discuss the social implications of the "fictive" kin groups that were the spiritual lineages.

Very few of the lay followers of the Adhinam have actually

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182 See David Ludden, "Agarian Organization in Tinnevelly District: 800 to 1900 A.D.", Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1978, pp. 44-82 for a discussion of patterns of settlement and group migrations in the Tirunelveli district.

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received diksa.[183] It is my understanding that the same forms of initiation are given both to lay members and tampirans, but that an aspirant to the status of tampiran must make a formal declaration of intention to give up family, desire for women, land, and wealth before the head of the lineage.[184]

I have also been told[185] that women can receive all three levels of initiation (and possibly acaryabhisekam). This information appears to be corroborated by earlier evidence. Civakkirayokikal of the line established at Suriyanarkoil had a female disciple, Cuvanta Nacciyar, whose inquiries led him to compose the work Civaneripirakacam.[186] Her commentary of the work shows thorough familiarity with the philosophical

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[183] T.N. Ramacandran, Director of the International Institute of Saiva Siddhanta Research at Dharmapuram estimated that no more than thirty people in South India at present have received one or another form of diksa from any of the velala lineage heads. During my stays at the centres, I met three people who told me that they had received initiation. I may have encountered others whose initiations were not made public to me. I also asked kurumakacannitanam from Dharmapuram if he would administer diksa to me, but he refused after carefully questioning my husband and me at great length about our family and "caste" background. His questions were especially concerned with the family name my husband and I share. Apparently our mixed "jati" backgrounds did not qualify us for membership in the lineage.

[184] This declaration is discussed in I.L.R. 10 Madras, pp. 388-90. At Dharmapuram it is made before kurumakacannitanam in the pujamantapa facing the cell where the image of Cokkanata is housed; at Tiruvavatuturai, the gift of body, soul and wealth is made not to the head of the lineage, but to Siva. At Tiruvavatuturai the declaration is made before the camati of Namaccivaya.

[185] Mu. Arunacalam, personal communication.

[186] Sri Sivagra-Yogi [Civakkirayokikal], Civaneriprakacam with Commentary, translated and edited by S. Anavaratavinayakan Pillai (Madras: Madras University Tamil Series, no. 7, 1936). Cuvanta Nacciyar is called a ripened soul in the translator's introduction, p. xiii.

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tenets of the system.

Although women of the appropriate caste backgrounds are considered qualified to be full members of the lay community,[187] only men with these backgrounds can become members of the spiritual lineage. A further qualification of life-long celibacy should be met by any man aspiring to be a tampiran. The tampiran are not technically sannyasis for at least two reasons. First, they do not come from a twice-born caste; none of the caste groupings which give sons to the lineage practices the rite of upanayana[188] and second, the tampiran, though ascetics, are not renunciates in an advaita sense. Their arena of activity is fully within the scope of worldly, albeit religious,

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[187] At the two gurupuja celebrations I witnessed at Tiruvavatuturai in 1984 and 1985, people from the centre drew my attention to a group of about six women who came from the Tirunelveli district. I was told that the women from Tirunelveli were not only exceptionally pious, but also very learned, and that they could captivate any audience on any Saiva topic with their extraordinary command of Tamil.

[188] On this questions, the court in Madras late last century passed a ruling on whether members of the pillai caste grouping, deemed to be sudras, could become sannyasis. The case, "Dharmapuram Pandara Sannadhi vs. Virapandiyar Pillai", is recorded in I.L.R. 22 Madras, 1899, pp. 303-4. As is the case with much of the litigation concerning these centres, the issues involved went well beyond the religious sphere and touched economic concerns. The brother of the plaintiff had entered the order at Dharmapuram. Upon his death, the plaintiff argued that, as a sudra, the brother was not entitled to take sannyasa, therefore the property left by him would be covered by the normal laws of inheritance, in which case, the plaintiff, and not the head of Dharmapuram would receive the property. The original ruling recognized the ties between the tampiran and the lineage and let the property stay with the Dharmapuram Adhinam. The plaintiff appealed, and the second ruling overturned the first, noting on the authority of the Mitaksara that the tampiran was a sudra and therefore not entitled to enter an order as a yati or sannyasi. The estate was thus deemed to follow the ordinary laws of inheritance, and was turned over to the plaintiff.

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affairs. The material from the velala centres also never refers to the tampiran as sannyasis.

Life-long celibacy (naistikabrahmacarya) seems to be a necessary requirement for tampiran status, yet this rule, like any other rule, has its exceptions. There is presently a member of the lineage of the Dharmapura Adhinam who had a wife and children, whom he apparently renounced before receiving nirvana diksa. I have also been told that such a person, although a tampiran, can never be eligible to lead the institution.

The lay people who frequent Dharmapuram usually come from families that have had a long history of association with this particular institution, and though there are occasional shifts of loyalty between Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram, the general rule seems to be that a relationship with one of the centre's lineages is part of one's inherited family tradition. For such families, contact with the institution can be seen as form of patronage that gives support of the lineage and its functions. Some even give family members to the Adhinam's ascetic order. In turn, they receive spiritual guidance, today mainly through the exemplary model of devotion and spiritual discipline they can see in Dharmapuram's present kurumakacannitanam. Yet, apart from the spiritual ties engendered by occasional audiences with the head of the lineage, ritual activities of lay members are restricted to the performance of personal worship and to attendance at the Adhinam's activities. Even if they have received nirvana diksa, lay members cannot participate, except vicariously, in any of the rites performed

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within the Adhinam, in part because they lack the necessary qualification of life-long celibacy that characterizes the members of the Adhinam's order and in part because their affiliation with the lineage is not the total commitment made by a tampiran.

For the ascetic members, the tampiran of the line, each stage of initiation carries with it duties and obligations within the lineage. Christopher Fuller observes that the Saiva initiations carried out among the priestly community of the Sri Minaksi temple at Madurai are, with the exception of acaryabhisekam, treated as rather unimportant rituals, often done hastily and carelessly.[189] The case is not quite the same for the lineages at Dharmapuram and Tiruvavatuturai. Their first Saiva initiation is samaya diksa, but individuals hoping to become tampiran must pass though a period of probation. Even before this period begins, the individual who comes before kurumakacannitanam seeking admission into the order must demonstrate a certain level of spiritual maturity calibrated in the determination he shows to kurumakacannitanam. This determination might be tested by repeated refusal of an applicant's entry,[190] discouragement and by other frustrating acts on the part of kurumakacannitanam. The background of the individual is carefully

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[189] C.J. Fuller, Sevants of the Goddess, p. 29.

[190] The present head of Tiruvavatuturai sought entry into Dharmapuram's order three times, meeting refusal and discouragement all three times. He then went to Tiruvavatuturai, which has not always had amicable relations with Dharmapuram. When the head of the lineage learned of the treatment the aspiring tampiran had received at Dharmapuram, he welcomed him to join the lineage at Tiruvavatuturai. The new initiate showed such aptitude that within nine months he was named to the cinna pitam, the "little seat", or office of successor-nominate.

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considered, as is his state of health. Dharmapuram's kurumakacannitanam is very reluctant to consider any individual with mental or physical defects, nor will he consider anyone who seeks the Adhinam as a haven from work.

When the individual is able to satisfactorily convince kurumakacannitanam of his spiritual vigour, he will be accorded the right to a probationary period. He is given vetti (Skt. vesti, a white dhoti) to wear and assigned tasks such as gathering flowers for use in puja or service in the Adhinam's library. Though not causing him to violate any of his caste rules, this service required of him is calculated to instill humility while still testing his character. He is also expected to begin to learn the history of the lineage and the tenets of its Saiva philosophy.[191]

The length of the probationary period is indeterminate. When kurumakacannitanam recognizes that the neophyte is ready, he will administer the first initiations, samaya and visesa which are administered together.[192] At this time, the neophyte must give up his family, his desire for women and wealth in a formal declaration. He declares before kurumakacannitanam that he bestows his body, soul and wealth upon the lineage. After kurumakacannitanam consecrates the

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[191] See discussion in I.L.R. 10 Madras, p. 388.

[192] These initiations are quite formulaic; judging from the information given to me by Dharmapuram's kurumakacannitanam, they generally appear to follow the descriptions given in the Tamil ritual manuals published by Dharmapuram, such as Civapujaviti (Dharmapuram: 1953). They are not administered automatically to the diciples of the centre, however. At Dharmapuram, the present kurumakacannitanam has refused to give nirvanadiksa to one of the centre's ascetics.

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initiate by performing a rite similar to those described above. In this performance, which takes place in the precincts of the cell housing Cokkanata, kurumakacannitanam presents the initiate with one of the diksa names common to the lineage. The initiate is also given golden earrings, a necklace of rudraksa, the ochre cloth he will from now on wear, and the other insignia that declare him to be a tampiran. Should a tampiran decide to renounce his membership in the lineage, as sometimes happens, he will remove the earrings and rudraksa before Cokkanata and leave the matam.[193]

The receipt of visesa diksa admits the tampiran to the lineage, but at this stage he is still unable to undertake worship on his own. He can only participate through his shared lineage affiliations with others' rites of worship. Until he is given nirvana diksa, the tampiran can only help others perform their duties and continue his education in the lineage's tradition. Nirvana diksa comes only when he shows a preparedness, or ripening of the soul, indications of which are discernible to the preceptor's insight. Preparedness is also indicated in his grasp of the puja rites. How long it takes before - if ever - the tampiran is administered nirvana diksa depends on this ripening.

Nirvana diksa is the culminating consecration for most tampiran at present. Through it, kurumakacannitanam makes the tampiran a full

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[193] The tampiran who tends Namaccivaya's camati at Tiruvavatuturai was originally a member of Dharmapuram's order. According to his account, he suffered such rough treatment at the hands of Dharmapuram's kurumakacannitanam that one day he fled from the matam. Before he fled, however, he said he threw (his empahsis) his earrings and rudraksa down before the cell housing Cokkanata, thus renouncing his membership in the lineage.

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member of the religious brotherhood, by giving him the spiritual status that entitles him to utter the lineage's mulamantra (the pancaksara, om namaccivaya). The tampiran is also given a spatika linga (crystal linga) and instructed in the way to care for it. With this diksa the tampiran may now tend the camati shrines of the previous preceptors.

As I noted above, the most recent rite of acaryabhiseka, that of the present kurumakacannitanam, was performed in the Jnanapurisvara temple.[194] The present kurumakacannitanam has told me that this is how it should be done, though I do not know if he will have the rite performed this way when he designates his successor. At Tiruvavatuturai, the present kurumakacannitanam received unction from his predecessor in a two-part rite. The first part was a private affair in which Tiruvavatuturai's present kurumakacannitanam was endowed with the power of preceptor. This consecration was then publicly proclaimed with an elaborate rite that followed the steps of the puja ritual as it is performed at Tiruvavatuturai. The present kurumakacannitanam's predecessor performed puja to him in the same way that it is performed to Siva, by giving him unction, presenting offerings to him, adorning him, and at the height of aratanai (the waving of the lamps) gave the people who had gathered in the matam at Tiruvavatuturai a vision of their new guru.

Lineage Deities

[194] A brief description and pictures that were taken afterwards appear in Vittuvan Iramalinkat Tampiran, ed., Sri-la-Sri Kayilaik Kurumani Ninaivu Malar (Dharmapuram: 1972), pp. 344f.

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The administration of the rites of initiation to members of the lineage determine the degree of access an individual has to the cycle of rites performed by the institution as a whole. These rites all pertain to puja - personal puja, puja at the lineage's camati shrines, puja to the lineage deities, and the other pujas I cited above. What distinguishes the Dharmapuram Adhinam's practice of worship from other puja rites performed throughout South India and elsewhere is its hierarchical relationship with the worship of Cokkanata, the personal linga of Kurunanacampantar, the founder of Dharmapuram's line.

The knowledge the Adhinam guards, as well as its customs and practices, descend from Kurunanacampantar, its founder. An initiate's knowledge of the manner in which to conduct his personal puja is the same knowledge that Kurunanacampantar gained from his preceptor and employed when he first conducted the worship of Cokkanata. Successive generations of heads of the Adhinam have imparted this knowledge to initiates. This knowledge of ritual is what constitutes the centre's body of wisdom (jnana). Though the various steps of the puja rites performed within the Adhinam adhere to the Agamic pattern described in the paddhati texts and Tamil ritual manuals, the knowledge of the rites possessed by the members of Dharmapuram's lineage has come from Kurunanacampantar.

The Adhinam's very legitimacy as an institution depends on this transmission of ritual knowledge. If the Adhinam would fail to keep up

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its tradition,[195] it would no longer have any justification for its existence and the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board - the branch of the government that controls religious institutions - would have the right to take over the other functions of the Adhinam.[196] The right of a religious institution at a matam to continue functioning depends on its faithfulness to its established tradition, which, in the case of Dharmapuram, rests on the worship of Cokkanata. Thus, the head of the Adhinam must ensure the linga's continued worship in order to maintain the viability of the tradition that he, as head of the lineage, embodies. His position as representative of the paramparai (lineage) is connected to his right (and obligation) to perform puja to Cokkanata which in turn relates to the question of succession in the lineage.

From what I have been told, the ascetic members of the Adhinam who have received nirvanadiksa may be qualified in a strict technical sense to undertake the worship of Cokkanata, but in practice only those to whom acaryabhisekam has been administered are considered competent, for they alone can be designated as successors to the gurupitam.

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[195] This relationship of the matam with a tradition of rites and practices led the turn of the century jurist, P.R. Ganapati Iyer, pp. 270-1, to make this claim:

> A place of worship is a necessary adjunct of a muth as the object of a muth is not merely the propagation of a system of religious doctrine, but also the propagation of the worship of God according to a particular cult. The worship though intended for the inmates...[is] also intended for the general public. At time of worship it is not possible for the head of a muth, or his disciples, to exclude the public. No muth can exist with out place for worship.

[196] See n. 153 above.

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Acaryabhisekam entitles its recipients to initiate others; as the name indicates, the rite qualifies one to be a preceptor. At Dharmapuram today, the rite will be administered to a tampiran to designate him as the successor to kurumakacannitanam. From the accounts given in the centre's chronicles, it appears that the earlier heads of the centre administered acaryabhisekam to more than one disciple.[197] The accounts of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam suggest the same, though there as well acaryabhisekam is at present only administered to the preceptor's designated successor.[198]

Administered after the initiate has already received three other levels of initiation, acaryabhisekam transforms the initiate into a preceptor. When a preceptor anoints his disciple during acaryabhisekam, he transmits to the disciple the essence of that which renders him a preceptor. The rite is unquestionably mystical. As described by the ritual manuals, the soul of the initiate, which has been properly consecrated with mantra, is drawn out by the preceptor during acaryabhiseka. In its place the sivatva, or "siva-ness" that pervades the preceptor, descends from Siva and passes through the preceptor into the initiate.[199] He is transformed; the signs of preceptorhood signify that transformation.

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[197] See Iramalinkat Tampiran, Kuru Vilapatu (Dharmapuram: 1982), pp. 91ff.

[198] See Ta. Ca Minatcicuntarampillai, Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, Tiruvavatuturai: 1962.

[199] See Sivagrayogin [Civakkirayokikal], Saivasannyasapaddhati (grantha edition, ed. Sriramasastri and Narayanasastri [Kumbhakonan:1932], pp. 163-69.

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Not everyone is privileged to undergo anointment. Only when the preceptor sees in the disciple the signs of grace, described by Dharmapuram's kurumahacannitanam as cattinipatam (the descent of sakti) will he administer acaryabhisekam.[200] Perhaps indiscernible to the ordinary eye, the indications of grace - manifest in certain unforetold proclivities - inform the preceptor of the readiness of the initiate to receive acaryabhisekam. The resulting accoutrements that surround the preceptor, the outward symbols of the palanquin, parasol, the palmyra fans that accompany him wherever he goes, indicate to all others the recipient's privileged state of grace.

At Dharmapuram, once a member of the Adhinam ascends to the gurupitam, which signifies the seat of authority of the lineage, he is considered to be Kurunanacampantaram.[201] In other words, the members of the Adhinam maintain that the rite of acaryabhisekam transfers the essence of the guru from the preceptor to the initiate. They maintain

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[200] A ritual manual such as Sivagrayogin [Civakkirayokikal], Saivasannyasapaddhati (ibid.), which outlines the step-by-step procedure of acaryabhiseka, does not raise the question of grace. Other works that include a section on jnana or wisdom do raise this issue. The Saivaparibhasa (Saivaparibhasa of Sri Sivagrayogin, English tran. by S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri, ed. by R. Balasubramanian and V.K.S.N. Raghavan, [Madras:1982]) defines the descent of grace as a necessary prerequisite of initiation and acaryabhisekam (pp. 293-95). The Varnasramacandrika likewise raises the issue of grace (p. 46 and passim).

[201] At Dharmapuram, I once posed a question to kurumakacannitanam about the equation of the head of the institution with the atikuru (the first guru), Kurunanacampantar. My interpreter, an ascetic but not an initiated member of Dharmapuram's order, literally gasped. Kurumakacannitanam, however, was unfazed. He responded with the gesture of tapping where he sat, the seat, or pitam, designating the guru's presence. He then pointed out that whenever he signs a cheque or other official document, his signature is "Kurunanacampantar".

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that because he has received this rite from the abhisekam of Kurunanacampantar,[202] the present kurumakacannitanam, who is the 26th in succession from Kurunanacampantar, is infused with the nature of Kurunanacampantar, who established the line. They hold that the present kurumakacannitanam, like all of his predecessors, is one and the same as Kurunanacampantar. That he must maintain the worship of Cokkanata acknowledges this equation.

The histories of the centres at Dharmapuram and Tiruvavatuturai usually refer to initiation as nanopatecam, or what is conventionally translated as "the teaching of wisdom". It must be remembered, however, that knowledge of the form of the ritual is also considered "wisdom" and is valued as highly as "insightful" wisdom. The idea of a hierarchy of karma-jnana, too often considered paradigmatic of the entire Hindu tradition, is inappropriate here.

Through generations of acaryabhisekam, the essence of the preceptor - the essence of Kurunanacampantar's presence as preceptor - has been maintained by Dharmapuram's spiritual lineage, kept alive, as it were, and transmitted from one preceptor to the next. Also transmitted are the mysteries of the ritual. In the cumulative rites of diksa, the initiate receives the knowledge Kurunanacampantar received from his guru. This ritual knowledge and Kurunanacampantar's presence are inseparable.

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[202] See above, in which I describe how the present kurumakacannitanam's anointing took place in the temple of Sri Jnanapurisvara, the temple considered to be the camati of Dharmapuram's founder. I understood from kurumakacannitanam's description of the rite that he literally received on his head the flow of abhisekam from the lingam.

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Guru

In that way, the status of the head of the Adhinam is quite complicated. As the heir of the paramparai, the present kurumakacannitanam is the most recent initiate in the line of teachers; as kurumakacannitanam, he is considered the embodiment of the first guru of the lineage. He is thus both foremost disciple of the first guru and the living presence of the first guru. In his status as the guru's disciple, he is bound by vows of obeisance to the guru. His posture is one of servitude, as the guru-disciple distinction is always maintained. Yet, on account of the arcaryabhisekam that transfers the essence of the teacher from one to the other, his presence is infused with that of the first guru: he is guru, par excellence. He is completely pervaded by grace and his very touch grants release. According to the Adhinam's Saiva Siddhanta tradition, the guru is the perfectly realized soul; he has, upon receiving the anointment, become of the nature of Siva. When the guru acts, it is actually Siva acting through the form of the guru.[203]

The chroniclers of Dharmapura Adhinam trace the lineage of the guru back thrugh important figures such as Umapati and Meykantar to Siva on Mount Kailasa.[204] There, according to their accounts,[205] Nanti

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[203] The eighth verse of Meykantar's Civananapotam speaks of Siva manifesting himself to the soul as a human guru. See Dhavamony, The Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta, pp. 332-333.

[204] See, for example, Ci. Arunaivativel Mutaliyar, "Turumaiyatinak Kuruparamparai" in Vittuvan Iramalingkat Tampiran, ed., Sri-la-Sri Kayilaik Kurumani Ninaivu Malar (Dharmapuram: 1972), p. 15.

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approached Siva as his first disciple and asked to be initiated into his mysteries. Nanti, once initiated transmitted these mysteries on to others. Dharmapuram's present **kurumakacannitanam** is heir to that transmission which consists of the sacred wisdom that has been transmitted from guru to disciple through initiation. For the members of the Dharmapura Adhinam, the seat of their guru is Mount Kailasa; the wisdom that animates their guru, embodied in the present **kurumakacannitanam**, is descended from Siva himself. It is the essence of Siva, the **sivatva** gained in **acaryabhisekam**.

Yet, the preceptor must also maintain his ritual responsibilities to worship Siva in his personal puja rites, in his worship of Cokkanata, and in his daily rounds in the temple. This ritual pattern which identifies representatives of the lineage with Siva, in his form as guru, and yet acknowledges Siva's superiority is consistent with Saiva Siddhanta teachings. The tradition exalts the guru through its axiom that the soul's release from its bonds is possible only through diksa (initiation) administered by the guru, whose form is that of Siva. At the same time, the tradition maintains a strict distinction between Siva (pati) and the soul (pasu), even the most fully realized soul. The human guru has a status that is somewhat ambiguous, for he can never be anything other than pasu albeit of the realized sort, and yet, as guru, his form is appropriated by Siva whenever he administers diksa. At times the guru is pasu, at times the guru is Siva, and at other times the guru is sivatva, saturated with

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[511] Ibid., p. 14.

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"sivaness". The ritual cycle that engages Dharmapuram's kurumakacannitanam flips back and forth to these different identies and holds them in suspended tension.

Lineage Rituals

The ritual cycle that kurumakacannitanam leads involves rites that occur within the Adhinam and activities that take him outside. I will begin this summary with the lineage rituals that occur within the matam. These consist mainly of a series of daily pujas that centre on the tutelary deities of the lineage and its members, annual events the most important of which is the celebration of gurupuja (an extensive worship of Kurunanacampantar on the anniversary of his "death"), and the occasional (naimittika) rites of diksa, funerary rites and the subsequent consecration of a camati shrine upon the death of the head of the lineage, and other such rites that are performed when the need arises.

As has been emphasized above, the main deity of Dharmapuram's lineage is a linga identified as Cokkanata, or Cokkalinga, the personal linga of Kurunanacampantar. Cokkanata is a form Siva uses to manifest himself in a moveable linga at Madurai;[206] Kurunanacampantar's possession of a form of Cokkanata establishes his relationship with the deity of that site. The hagicgraphy of Kurunanacampantar explains this relationship.

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206 C.J. Fuller, Servants of the Goddess, pp. 11-12.

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The account[207] depicts Kurunanacampantar at the temple in Madurai as a young boy who let his parents return to their home in Srivillipur without him because he was overcome with ecstasy at the sight of Sundaresvara and Minaksi. He remained at the temple following the daily pattern of worship in the temple, but when he noticed Saiva ascetics engaged in their own worship, complete with mantra, bhavana, and kriya, he despaired. He himself wanted to worship, but he had no spiritual instruction, no image, and no knowledge of the procedure of worship. After he appealed to Sundaresvara (Siva who is housed in the garbhagrha of the temple at Madurai), the Lord appeared to him in a dream and directed him to a coffer immersed in the temple tank. The boy found the coffer, and when he opened it, he was stunned to see Cokkalinga. But he still did not know how to perform puja.

That night, he again had a dream in which Cokkanata appeared before him and told him to proceed to Tiruvarur. There he was told he would meet Nnanaprakacar who, hailing from a line of disciples, would initiate him into the supreme knowledge and impart to him knowledge of the mode of ritualistic worship. That same night Nnanaprakacar also had a dream in which Lord Tyagaraja, the deity of Tiruvarur, informed him of Nancampantar's coming and instructed him to teach Nancampantar personal worship of Cokkanata. Nanacampantar set out for Tiruvarur and in the presence of Daksinamurti in the Siddhisvaram shrine of the temple

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[207] I have taken this account from Mu. Arunachalam, Guru jnana Sambandhar. The Philosopher Inspired by Madurai (Dharmapuram:1981). A pictorial account is displayed in the pujamantapa. Pictures from this account are reproduced in Sirkali Mahakumpapicekamalar (Dharmapuram: 1961).

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encountered Nanaprakacar who was waiting for him. Nanaprakacar took Nanacampantar as his disciple and in time instructed him in Siva puja. After a miraculous event involving an ever-burning torch in a rainstorm,[208] Nanaprakacar deemed Nanacampantar to be fully realized and sent him to Dharmapuram to establish his own line. He installed Cokkanata in a matam at Dharmapuram where the linga has purportedly been worshipped daily from the sixteenth century right up to the present.

Daily Worship

I provide below the basic structure of the daily pattern of worship. Many of the details of kurumakacannitanam's daily activities have been omitted from this description. Complete analysis of the Adhinam's ritual cycle would be a separate study in itself.

On an ordinary day, kurumakacannitanam begins puja to Cokkanata at about eight o'clock in the morning and completes it around ten thirty. This rite takes place in the puja hall located within the matam where the Cokkanatalinga is housed. From what I have been told, kurumakacannitanam spends the earlier part of the morning engaged in personal preparation and japam (recitation of sacred name, for initiates of Dharmapuram japa consists of recitation of the pancaksara). The morning ritual is lengthy because it involves not only the image of Cokkanata, but also Cokkanata's consort, kurumakacannitanam's personal

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[208] This incident has a counterpart in the legends at Tiruvavatuturai. I discuss it below in the chapter on Tirumalikaittevar.

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linga and several other images. For each image, kurumakacannitanam completes a sixteen act rite of worship that includes abhisekam (unction). At the completion of the offerings, one or two otuvars (Tamil hymn singers), who are standing in the porch-like front (antarala) of the shrine express adoration of Cokkanata by singing several Tamil hymns, such as the Cokkanatavenpa composed by Kurunanacampantar.[209] Also standing in this area are whatever tampiran of the lineage who happen to be in Dharmapuram. While the otuvars sing, kurumakacannitanam leads the tampiran in three circumambulations of the image. When the circumambulations are complete, a group of young otuvars (ranging in age from about seven to fifteen), who are being trained by the Adhinam for placement in Saivite temples in accordance with their traditional profession, sing several more hymns. After they finish, kurumakacannitanam does a complete prostration before Cokkanata and then, like a temple priest, he distributes viputi (sacred ashes) to the initiates (tampiran) of the Adhinam who have attended the puja, to the otuvars and to anyone else who has attended the ritual.

Kurumakacannitanam then does another circumambulation of Cokkanata and proceeds to the gurumantapa where images and photographs of the previous heads of the Adhinam are displayed. There, while reciting the pancaksara, he strews vilva leaves, flowers and rose water about the room to honour the gurus of his lineage and pauses in front of a large image of his predecessor with hands clasped. He then enters

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[209] Some of the works of Gurunanacampantar are available in Sri Kurunanacampantar Attakam, edited by Ci. Arunaivativel (Dharmapuram: 1971).

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otukkam, the hall where he alternately sits in meditation and conducts the Adhinam's business, which is just adjacent to the gurumantapa, and repeats the same scattering of offerings to the gurupitam, the large image of Mount Kailasa looming over the gurupitam, and other icons and images collected there. The public is barred entry from both the gurumantapa and otukkam while kurumakacannitanam makes these offerings, though initiates of the Adhinam are expected to accompany him. The tampiran receive blessings (prasadam) in the form of sacred ash when kurumakacannitanam is finished with this display of devotion.

He then continues japa until he goes to temple complex just to the north of the Adhinam which houses three separate temples, the Jnanapurisvara temple that is also the camati of Kurunanacampantar,[210] the Dharmapurisvara temple, and the Mahalaksmi temple built by the 25th kurumakacannitanam.

In these temples, he receives prasadam in the form of sacred ashes (vibhuti) and red powder (kunkum) wrapped in vilva leaves from the sivacarya who conducts the puja at each shrine. Before he leaves the temple complex, he is honoured by the temple elephant which is made to trumpet and kneel before him, and performs a symbolic worship of the cow

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[210] The temple is supposed to have been built by Sri-la-Sri Macilamanitecika, the fourth preceptor of the lineage. It is most unusual for a sivacarya to perform the puja at a camati shrine of a non-Brahmin. None of the other camati shrines located on the grounds of Dharmapura is attended by sivacaryas. Dr. A.V. Jeyachandrun (personal communication) has suggested that the Jnanapurisvara temple was standing before Kurunanacampantar's camati was placed there. On the basis of architectural style, he suggests that the temple dates to the eleventh century and that an underground chamber was dug at the side of the temple where Kurunanacampantar entered into camati.

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by offering food to a young calf. He then returns to otukkam to conduct the Adhinam's business and receive visitors until the mid-day meal at about three-thirty in the afternoon. In connection with the temples it administers and the properties it controls, there is a constant stream of lawyers, accountants, local politicians, district collectors, and others coming to see kurumakacannitanam.

The morning worship is the most extensive of the day, but there are two other daily occasions of puja for kurumakacannitanam. About six o'clock in the evening, kurumakacannitanam makes a round to the small cluster of camati shrines in a grove to the west of the matam. Four camatis are located there, including that of his immediate predecessor.[211] One of the two or three tampiran residing at Dharmapuram has the responsibility of attending to the daily puja of these shrines. When kurumakacannitanam makes his evening round to the grove, this tampiran undertakes a short aratanai (waving of lamps) to each camati, as kurumakacannitanam shows obeisance. Then, around ten o'clock in the evening after he has received his last visitor, kurumakacannitanam enters the cell where Cokkanata is kept and undertakes a short closing ritual completed with mantra alone. The tampiran must attend this late evening rite, but outside visitors are not welcome. After kurumakacannitanam has completed this worship of Cokkanata, he once again goes to temple and makes a complete round of

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[211] An account of the consecration of the 25th kurumakacannitanam's camati shrine appears in "Tarumaitinam 25 avatu Kkurumakacannitanam Sri-la-Sri Kayilai Kurumani Avarkalin Mutalantuk Kurupucai Vila Kurumurtta Alaya Makakumpapiseka Vila" in Srilasri Kayakaik Kurumani Ninaivu Malar, pp. 442-446.

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the deities there, lingering in front, but outside of the garbhagrha of Janapurisvara.

On Thursdays, "guru's day", kurumakacannitanam fasts and in honour of his preceptor, he observes a complete vow of silence (though he is not adverse to writing messages). He also offers worship to all the camatis found on Dharmapuram's grounds, including those in the second cluster of shrines near the branch of the Kaveri that flows to the north of Dharmapuram. Here again, he offers worship through the tampiran assigned to maintain the shrines.

Other weekly activities include reception of the head of the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal whose centre is linked in a sisya (disciple) relationship with the lineage at Dharmapuram. Known as the kurumakacannitanam's first or head tampiran, the head of the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal comes to pay his respects to kurumakacannitanam and undoubtedly to talk business.

In addition to this regular cycle of activity,[212] there are two annual festivals celebrated by Dharmapuram's lineage. One is the celebration of gurupuja, which takes place in the month of May. During this celebration, Dharmapuram both pays homage to its first guru on the anniversary of his camati (i.e., death) and reconsecrates the present guru through abhisekam. In the chapter on mahesvarapuja I describe in some detail gurupuja as it occurs at Tiruvavatuturai. As the differences between Tiruvavatuturai's and Dharmapuram's celebrations are

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[212] The Adhinam publishes an annual almanac, Iraktaksi Varusam listing dates and events of significance.

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not structural, I will not describe Dharmapuram's rite here.

The other festival celebrated by Dharmapuram Adhinam takes place on Ati Amavacai, the new moon day in the Tamil month of Ati. This one-day festival is unique to Dharmapuram and commemorates the vision of Mount Kailasa had by the predecessor of the present kurumakacannitanam, which was gained during a pilgrimage.[213] The Ati Amavacai festival involves worship of the image of Mount Kailasa that hangs over the gurupitam in otukkam, homage to the 25th kurumakacannitanam who attained this vision, and a night procession through the four streets that surround the matam and temple complex.

These celebrations and the daily rites summarize the obligatory (nitya) rites of the lineage. As for the occasional rites (naimittika), I have already discussed diksa above. I have no first hand familiarity with the other naimittika rites undertaken by the lineage.

Ritual Activity outside Dharmapuram

Because of the Adhinam's role as trustee of twenty-four temples, several of which are quite important pilgrimage sites, and trustee of special endowments (kattalai) at three other places, kurumakacannitanam has occasion to receive temple honours in places outside of Dharmapuram. What occurs on such occasions is evinced by a

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[213] This pilgrimage is described in Co. Cinkaravelan, "Panpunalankal", in p. 58; Ca. Tantapani Tecikar, "Arul Anupavankalir Cila", ibid., p. 42; Vacanta Vaittiyanatan, "Tayir Ciranta Talaivan!", ibid., p. 117.

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rite at Vaitisvarakoil, a temple city located roughly midway between the Dharmapuram Adhinam and Citamparam. At the Vaitiyanatacuvami temple of Vaitisvarankoil, which is under the management of Dharmapuram, a special service is performed monthly on the kartikai day.[214] This special rite entails a mahabhisekam (large unction) of the snana (bathing) image of Sri Mutukumarasvami, the temple's form of Subramanya who is said to possess extraordinary curative powers. The mahabhisekam is performed by a temple priest, but Dharmapuram's kurumakacannitanam presides over the rite in the sense that he stands on the platform near both the priest and the images as the rite is performed before an audience of devotees that sometimes numbers thousands. Each offering that is made during the puja is first presented to kurumakacannitanam and then made to the deities. When the tirtam (abhiseka fluids collected after the unction) is distributed after the rite, it is kurumakacannitanam who presents the bottled mixtures of Ganga water, rose water and pure milk to the devotees, having himself first received the bottled tirtam from the temple priest.

His role in this rite marks him as an intermediary between the deity and devotee; apparently his combined statuses of ascetic, preceptor and trustee entitle him to this role. In addition to this monthly appearance at Vaitisvarankoil, he travels to other temples under the trusteeship of his lineage on ritually significant occasions.

Kurumakacannitanam also travels to other Saiva temples where his

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[214] Sri Vaithianathaswamy Temple, Vaitheeswarankoil (Dharmapuram: 1959), p. 3 mentions this rite.

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centre has no immediate interests. Though the Dharmapuram Adhinam does not claim trusteeship of any endowments at the Sri Minaksi temple at present, **kurumakacannitanam** will make an appearance at the cyclical revitalization ceremony (**mahakumbhabhisekam**) of the temple, and will be duly received by the chair of the temple's Board of Trustees. He will also travel to Citamparam during the annual **Markali** festival to worship at the temple of Nataraj and receive temple honours. These travels, and other appearances at conferences of religous leaders, make for a busy schedule. To make the schedule even more hectic, the present **kurumakacannitanam** will not stay away from Dharmapuram overnight lest the daily worship of Cokkanata be neglected. He has not endowed any of the tampiran with the right to perform the main lineage rite. It is with this rite of worship that his ritual responsibilities are most intimately connected. The other appearances which I have briefly described, though they takes him often quite far afield, evolve out of his status as the embodiment of his lineage's guru.

Atmarthapuja

Members of the Adhinam staff and public who happen to be in the matam at Dharmapuram when **kurumakacannitanam** conducts the morning rite to Cokkanata can and often do watch this rite. In a strict technical sense, the rite is not a public rite, or pararthapuja (puja for the sake

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of others).[215] The worship of Cokkanata falls under the classification of atmarthapuja (puja for one's own sake) for two reasons: first, because the benefits of the worship accrue to Adhinam, which is in effect the lineage embodied by the present kurumakacannitanam, and second, because the members of the Adhinam are technically disqualified from performing pararthapuja (puja for the sake of others), as it is performed in Saivite temples by temple priests, or sivacaryas. This disqualification pertains to caste status. Though the five caste groupings from which members of the lineage are drawn are high ranking and quite orthodox, they are, by Agamic reckonings, not fit to undertake pararthapuja. In fact, some of these communities are sometimes classified as sudra, a label that members of the Adhinam have at times not entirely rejected out of hand.[216]

However, whether the puja to Cokkanata is atmartha or parartha is of dispute among the people associated with the Adhinam. The head

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[215] See discussion in Carl Gustav Diehl, Instrument and Purpose, p. 56.

[216] A Sanskrit work, the Varnasramacandrika (Dharmapuram: 1930), compiled in the early eighteenth century by Tiruvampalatecikar, the seventh Gurumahasannidhanam of Dharmapuram takes up the discussion of whether a sudra is entitled to become a preceptor. The text provides some insight into how members of the Dharmapura Adhinam perceived themselves, revealing -- at least in the context of this work -- that they did not reject the label of sudra out of hand. I will have more to say on this work in the final chapter of the thesis. In the work, the question of atmartha and pararthapuja comes up (verses 249ff, 459-64, and elsewhere). The argument of the text is unequivocal on the point that only a grhastabrahmana is entitled to perform pararthapuja, but goes on in later sections to equate the characteristics of a naistika, or life long celibate, of the fourth or sudra class with those of a Brahmin. In light of remarks made by a Brahmin of a near-by village (see below) during an interview, that statement provided some insight into how kurumakacannitanam is perceived by his community.

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sivacarya of the Siva temple at Dharmapuram expressed an uneasiness with the public nature of the puja, and stated that only a sivacarya is entitled to do a pararthapuja and that these are done only in temples.[217] Kurumakacannitanam on the other hand feels that because the public can attend the puja it is done for the public and thus is a type of pararthapuja. He feels that benefit of the puja goes to everyone and not merely to the Adhinam.[218] Other Brahmins feel that because the present kurumakacannitanam is a good head of the institution (i.e., because he has remained a life-long celibate) then what he does is acceptable.[219] A member of the staff of the Oriental College attached to the Adhinam, a Brahmin,[220] hesitated over the question. Members of the Pillai community who are on staff at the Adhinam feel that it is a public puja.[221] This small sample of attitudes reveals interesting differences in the definition of "public". Members of caste groupings closely associated with the lineage feel that the puja is an inclusive rite. Certain temple priests do not.

The manner in which the worship of Cokkanata is carried out - undertaken within the Adhinam, but undertaken where the public has access to it - in some ways reinforces an ambiguity. The public is permitted access to the centre's main daily ritual, but this "public",

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[217] Personal communication, August 7th, 1984.

[218] Personal communication, July 14th, 1984.

[219] Ati caiva, Anandarandapuram, personal communication, July 4, 1984.

[220] Personal communication, February, 19th, 1985.

[221] Staff member, personal communication, July 15th, 1984.

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apart from the odd Western anthropologist or religious studies scholar, consists mainly of velalas whose families have had a long-standing relationship with the centre. Seen through this network of caste and hereditary affiliations, the worship of Cokkanata appears rather similar to that of a clan deity. In his public worship of Cokkanata, kurumakacannitanam does perform a rite of pararthapuja, a rite for the sake of others, but these others are by virtue of their shared velala-ness made up of the same "stuff" as kurumakacannitanam. Though separated from the ordinary velala householder, the members of Dharmapuram's lineage have never lost, abandoned, destroyed, or killed the caste identities they held prior to admittance to Dharmapuram's order. They may have given up their desire for women, but their caste identity pervails. And, their ritual activity is intended to benefit their velala brotherhood.

While the members of the Adhinam never aspire to be considered a "Brahmin" group, they clearly claim the right that their head be recognized as their religious preceptor. At the same time, they acknowledge Agamic proscriptions that restrict them from undertaking certain ritual activities, such as the installation of a fixed linga. For that reason the Adhinam retains in its employment temple priests who work both in the Adhinam and in the temples it administers.

Examples abound. In the daily worship of Cokkanata, no sivacarya is employed, but when a head of the lineage dies and a camati, or temple, is erected over the site where his body is buried, the head sivacarya is actively involved in the construction of the

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temple and the consecration of the linga placed in it. Likewise, sivacaryas conduct the rituals in the temples the Adhinam controls, though the Adhinam has a representative, usually a tampiran, stationed at each of these temples to oversee that the Adhinam's endowments are properly maintained. In this way, temple priests, as well as members of other castes, have had a long, hereditary association with the Adhinam, based on an understood division of ritual entitlements.[222]

This relationship is not without its moments of distrust - shown in doubts as to whether kurumacannitanam is really the religious figure his office demands, or whether the sivacarya really knows what to do in the temple or is just improvising - but it essentially operates with each group's activities defined by the context of the other's. The one main anomaly at Dharmapuram is the sivacarya's performance of the puja of Kurunanacampantar. Because what is claimed to be his camati is understood to be a Siva temple within Dharmapuram's large temple complex and Kurunanacampantar is now identified as Jnanapurisvara, the responsibility of puja is more appropriate to a sivacarya, but this reason is not entirely satisfactory. An incident from Dharmapuram's past may help fill in this explanation. That incident is discussed in Chapter Eight.

Present South Indian politics dictate a certain tension between brahmin and non-brahmin communities. This present tension has its roots

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[222] One of the most graphic illustrations of this relationship occurs during the gurupuja celebration. Temple priests who serve in the Adhinam's temples come to Dharmapuram to exchange honours with kurumakacannitanam. They bring him prasadam from the temples, which he accepts at the same time as he presents them with vibhuti.

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in the late nineteenth century and in the origins of the Justice Party.[223] The present undercurrent of anti-brahmin feelings is often projected back into Tamil history, with the idea that there has always existed some friction, or latent antagonism, though the evidence for such tension is not always forthcoming. Today's ritual patterns of the Dharmapuram Adhinam, which I suggest are rooted in the centre's inherited tradition, give little indication that the impulse of caste revolt or a movement towards egalitarianism led to the emergence of velala lineages in South India. In the next, and final section of this chapter, I will suggest other explanations for the lineages' development.

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[223] See Eugene Irschick, Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1927 (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1969), for further discussion.

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Ascetic Members

Before being formally admitted to the Saiva lineages of these centres, a person must sever ties with the natal family. At present, this act is accomplished when the aspiring initiate makes a formal declaration of renunciation of wealth, family and progeny before the head of the institution who is also the head of the lineage. Such formal renunciation of family is often alluded to in the poetry which has been composed by members of these institutions. For example, a set of verses composed by the eighteenth century Tottikkalai Cuppiramanyamunivar of Tiruvavatuturai speaks of this renunication:

> We, who have renounced women, society, those who lay claim to us, wealth and even birth,
> We have in our loneliness your sacred feet as our only refuge.[224]

The life-long celibacy (naistikabrahmacarya) that seemed to have been required of most initiates of the lineage is a guarantee of the individual's unambiguous status. Membership in natal group was replaced with membership in a "fictive" kin group. Were a member of the new kin group defined by the preceptor-disciple line to retain membership in another kin group defined by birth status, situations of competing demands and competing loyalities could result. As demonstrated elsewhere in this work, the ascetic residents of the velala matas at

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[224] Aracanacanattu aranilaiyam, p. 223.

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Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram perform a wide variety of tasks that take them well into political and economic arenas. As I have noted above, these centres resemble networks of authority or even "sub-kingdoms" that cut across localized pockets of political authority. The members of these lineages may have been renunciates in the sense that they abandoned their family ties, but they hardly renounced society for their involvement in their new lineages. Further, their "renunciation" of their families arguably freed them to take on the tasks that devolved with the expansion of lineage's network of operations. Their membership in an ascetic lineage cancelled their immediate family ties, but it did not, as we have seen, cancel out their caste ties. The ascetic lineage appears to have been a prototypic caste association that raised the defining characteristic of caste membership, namely kin ties, to a higher level of horizontal linkage. Based on the kinship patterns of group membership out of which they emerged, these associations of spiritually-linked individuals had larger arenas of operation than did the more locality-bound family groups.

This way of looking at the self-enforced celibacy of the lineage's members suggests that the asceticism they practiced served quite practical purposes in addition to the spiritual fortification it entailed. The ascetic members of a "fictive" lineage renounced kin in order to transcend the local boundaries of kin-society. At the same time, their very make-up imitated kin membership, while their caste affiliations provided for broader horizontal linkage. And that it often did, for the tampiran of the centres often came from places quite

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distant to either Tiruvavatuturai or Dharmapuram, and these centres in turn assigned their representatives to their outposts as far away as Suchindram in the deep south and Kasi in northern India. This territorial transcendence appears to have established networks of authority that involved supra-local integration. Though the ascetic members of these institutions lived at the margins of kin-based society, they in fact pushed social margins further and further afield in their arena of operation.

This feature of ascetic lineage is not certainly new to the velala Saiva lineages established at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram. Epigraphical references to lineages in South India that predate their beginnings suggest similar patterns of fairly large networks of influence. For an example, we can look right to Kamalai Nanaprakacar, the teacher of the founder of the lineage at Dharmapuram. He is a well-known figure in Tamil literature who composed numerous works, among them manuals of rituals (Piracatamalai, Civapucai akaval), puranas (Maluvatippuranam), and the Tiruvarurppallu, a work in which out-caste farm labourers discuss Saiva philosophy.[225] The first part of his name, Kamalai, locates him at Tiruvarur, as Kamalai or Kamalalaya is another name of Tiruvarur.[226] Initiated disciples of Kamalai Nanaprakacar were situated at Saiva centres in different locations; there was one in Tiruvorriyur, another in Maturai, as well as Kurunanacampantar at Dharmapuram. What relations there were between these co-disciples and

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[225] K. Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, pp. 204 and 258.

[226] Mu. Arunacalam, Guru Jnana Sambandhar, p. 101.

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their disciples is difficult to ascertain from the evidence available, though Nirampa Alakiya Tecikar, a disciple of Kamalai Nanaprakacar and a co-disciple of Kurunanacampantar, composed the Kurunanacampantar malai, a set of verses in praise of Kurunaracampantar.[227]

Two epigraphical records mention Nanaprakasar. An epigraph[228] from Sikkil in the Tanjavur District dated 1562-3 records that the parateci (meaning either ascetic or someone from different locality) Nanaprakacar-Pantaram of Tiruvarur was appointed supervisor of the accounts of the temples at Sikkil, Vatakuti, Votaceri and other places under the order of Krishnamarasayya, son of Ali[ya]-Ramarasayya. These accounts related to the income from land in villages (ur) that were not Brahmin settlements (sabha). Another inscription from the Puttukottai District[229] records the construction of a matam for Nanaprakaca-Pantaram of Tiruvarur at the behest of Viru-Puchchaya Nayakar. I doubt whether this inscription means that Nanaprakacar was to live at this matam located a considerable distance to the south of Tiruvarur; rather the matam marked a place in this region where Nanaprakacar's authority, either as a preceptor or as an administrator, extended.

Though the term pantaram is characteristic of velala preceptors and appears in this usage only after the Vijayanagara period, records from earlier times find ascetics and members of spiritual lineages in

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227 K. Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, p. 204.

228 A.R.E. no. 104 of 1911.

229 Pudukottai, no. 955.

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administrative roles within the temple structure. An inscription dating 1284-5 CE[230] from a temple in the Ramnad District, for example, mentions that the temple at Tiruttaliyandar was under the supervision of a tapasvin named Tiruvitaimaruturaiyan Porpadikkunayakan Tiruccirrambalamutaiyar alias Abhimuktisvara-udaiyar. The titles of this ascetic, tiruvitaimaruturaiyan and tirucirrampalamutaiyar, indicate that he was connected with Tiruvitaimarutur, near Tiruvavatuturai, and Citamparam. This example is supported by other material; Cynthia Talbot,[231] V.V. Mirashi,[232] and others[233] have collected descriptions of religious lineages in medieval South India which show the presence of members of the same lineage group at different temple sites. I will examine some of this work below when I look at earlier lineage groups that may have contributed to the emergence of the Tamil velala lineages.

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[230] A.R.E. no. 167 of 1935-6.

[231] Cynthia Talbot, "Kings and Brahmins: A Study of Dana in Medieval Andhra", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1988.

[232] V.V. Mirashi, "The Saiva Acaryas of the Mattamayura Clan", in Journal of Indian History, vol. XXVI, no. 1 (March 1950), pp. 1-16.

[233] See, for example, B.L.G. Swamy, "The Golaki School of Saivism in the Tamil Country" in Indian Historical Quarterly, vol. LIII, no. 1, April 1975, pp. 167-209 and V.S. Pathak, Saiva Cults in North India from Inscriptions (700 AD to 1200 AD) (Varanasi: Dr. Ram Naresh Varma, 1960).

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PART TWO

LINEAGE ROOTS

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CHAPTER THREE

KAILASAPARAMPARAI

In this section of the thesis, I look at the ways in which the velala lineages identify themselves. I also look at their statements about their past, and what they claim their origin is. Chapter Three explores how the velala lineages define the line of Kailasa. Chapter Four compares this claim with evidence of sources that contributed to the development of the lineages. In that chapter, I focus on two earlier Saiva mystics who lived at Tiruvavatuturai to see if there is any relationship between them and the later velala tradition. In Chapter Five, I look at evidence of other earlier lineages that were present in South India, and suggest that the structure of present velala institutions is based in part on the influence of these earlier lineages.

Kailasaparamparai

Members of the lineages headquartered at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram identify themselves as "kailasaparamparai", the lineage of

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Mount Kailasa.[234] The line of descent as it is counted by Tiruvavatuturai is given below:

Lord Siva in the form of Srikantaparamahesvara

Heavenly line
- Nantitevar
- Canarkumaramunivar
- Cattiyataracani
- Parancoti

The Four Earthly Preceptors
- Meykantar
- Arunanti
- Marainanacampantar
- Umapati

Teachers Descending from Umapati
- Arunamaccivaya
- Cittarcivappirakacatecikar

The Founder of the Lineage at Tiruvavatuturai
- Namaccivayamurti

In this section of the thesis, I will focus on the background of the kailasa paramparai. First I will present the tradition as it is told today, then I will examine information about the background of the lineage that comes from other material.

Both the centres at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram trace the origin of their teachings and ritual practices back to Mount Kailasa, where, according to their tradition, Nandi approached Siva as Siva's first disciple and asked to be initiated into his mysteries. Nandi,

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234 Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, passim; Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 6, 8, passim; A. Kalyanacuntara Tecikar, "Tarumaiyatina Kuruparamparai Varalaru" in Velur Kumpapiseka Malar (Vaittisvarankoil: 1970), pp. 373-81; Ira. Celvakkanapati, "Tarumatina Kuruparamparai Varalaru", in Anaittulak Caiva Cittanta Mutal Kuruttarankam Vila Malar (Dharmapuram: 1984), pp. 101-38.

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once initiated, transmitted these mysteries to his disciple, the celestial Canarkumaramunivar who, in turn, passed them on to Cattiyananataricani.[235] According to this tradition as it is presented today, Parancoti, the fourth of this celestial line took an earthly disciple, the child prodigy Meykantar, who is credited with producing the Civananapotam. Though not the earliest of the fourteen works known as the Caiva Cittanta Cattiram (Skt. Saiva Siddhanta Sastra), this work is considered seminal by all Saiva Siddhantins.[236] In the lineage accounts published by Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram in this century, Meykantar, and the three in the line after him, Arulanti, Marainanacampantar and Umapati, are considered the main preceptors (cantanaciriyar, Skt. santanacarya) of Saiva Siddhanta. The bulk of the canon is ascribed to Umapati, who according to legend was a titcitar (Skt. diksitar) of Citamparam.[237] His conversion to Saivism was triggered by a remark he heard from Marainanacampantar who commented, "There goes a blind man on dead wood" as Umapati passed by in a palanquin.[238] Of the fourteen works to make up the Caiva Cittanta Cattiram, seven are considered Umapati's works.[239] Umapati also

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[235] Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, pp. 14-21.

[236] Uyyavantattevar' Tiruvuntiyar and Tirukalirrupatiyar preceded Meykantar's Civananapotam.

[237] See, for example, Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, pp. 8-43.

[238] Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, p. 33.

[239] Of the fourteen works considered canonical by Saiva Siddhantins, seven are understood to have been compiled before Umapati. These are:

Uyyavantattevar's Tiruvuntiar (early 12th cent. CE)

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provides us with an account of his lineage in his kuruvanakkam (passages that pay homage to the preceptors) in his Civappirakacam.[240] In a version that is a little different from those circulated in the velala lineage literature, he pays homage first to Tirunanti who belongs to the entourage surrounding Siva, to Catyananataracani,[241] who descended on earth, and to Paracoti, who sat at Catyananataracani's feet. Then he praises Meykantar, Arunanti, and finally Marainanacampantar, whom Umapati identifies as a samavedi belonging to the paracaramamunivar gotra and whom Umapati hails as his own guru.

The legends about these four preceptors are replete with conversion and status change. Meykantar is said to have been found on the steps of a temple by Accutar Kalappalar, a velala chieftain in the

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Uyyavantattevar's Tirukkalirrupatiar (early approx. 1178 CE)
Meykantar's Civananapotam (later 12th cent. CE)
Arunanti's Civananacittiyar (early 13th cent. CE)
Arunanti's Iruparirupatu (13th cent. CE)
Manavacakam Katantar's Unmaivilakkam (14th cent. CE)
Manavacakam Katantar's Unmai neri Vilakkam (14th cent, CE)

The remaining seven works are credited to Umapati:
Civaneriprakacam
Tiruvarutpayan
Vinavenpa
Porripahrotai
Kotikkavi
Nenjuvitututu
Cankarpanirakavanam.

[240] Civappirakacam in Meykantar Cattiram (Dharmapuram: 1956), p. 246, vss. 5 and 6.

[241] The two names Meykantar and Catyananatarcani mean the same thing, "the one who saw the truth." In Umapati's kuruvanakkam, he cites Catyananataracani as descended to earth; in the later mata accounts, Meykantar was the first one on earth to receive the teachings.

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Tanjavur area.[242] At a very young age, he received initiation from Parancoti, and settled at Tiruvennainallur. Arunanti, who before he became the disciple of Meykantar was known as Cakalakamapantiar, "the scholar of all the Agamas", belonged to an Aticaiva, or Brahmin, family. According to legend,[243] Cakalakamapantiar was a respected teacher whose pupils included Meykantar's adopted father, but he found that he was gradually losing students to the much younger Meykantar, so he set out towards Tiruvennainallur where he found Meykantar discoursing on ego, one of the three fetters of the soul. Cakalakamapantiar went up to him and demanded that he indicate what form it took. Meykantar simply looked at him. The aticaiva suddenly realized that in his ignorant condition, he himself embodied ego and thus fell at Meykantar's feet, who took him on as disciple and gave him the name Arunanti.

Marainanacampantar is the next preceptor after Arunanti. His story in today's traditional accounts is very short and very vague.[244] He is described as having renounced women and as ativarnaccirami, beyond varna and asrama.[245] Whatever disciple/preceptor relationship he had with Arunanti is summarized with the expression that Arunanti graced him with the wisdom of Siva. The accounts then describe how Marainanacampantar established an ascetic's residence (kukai) at

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[242] Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, p. 22.

[243] Ibid., p. 25.

[244] Ibid., pp. 29-31; most of this account repeats the line of descent from Kailasa and tells the story of Umapati's conversion.

[245] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 31.

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Citamparam and through his teachings brought many cittar (mystics) to realization. There he converted Umapti with the remark mentioned above. According to these legends, the background of these four preceptors thus consists of a velala prodigy, a caivacarya, a mystic renunciate (whom Umapati describes as a samavedi brahmin), and a titcitar brahmin.

I simply do not know how accurate these stories are;[246] the characters of Arunanti, Marainanacampantar, and Umapati may well be more symbolically correct representations of the kinds of preceptors who contributed to the making of the Saiva Siddhanta tradition, rather than historically accurate depictions of Meykantar and the other santanacarya. The basis for order of descent running from Meykantar through Arunanti, Marainanacampantar, and Umapati appears to be the kuruvanakkam verses from Umapati's Civapirakacam.[247] Yet even though Umapati is credited with composing half of what are now considered the canonical works of Saiva Siddhanta, he is omitted entirely from the kuruvanakkam (verses that pay homage to the preceptors) of the early works from Tiruvavatuturai's line. One of the earliest works of Tiruvavatuturai's Pantara Cattiram,[248] Sri Tatcinamurttitecikar's

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[246] K. Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, V.S. Davamony, The Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta, and others simply repeat these stories, attributing them to legend. I think that these stories originated with Caminatattampiran's work in the last century, but there might be earlier versions of these legends of which I am unaware.

[247] Cited in n. 243 above.

[248] Tiruvavatuturai's Pantaram Cattiram series consists of works composed by members of its lineage. Appendix A lists the works that are included in this series.

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Tacakariyam[249] makes no mention whatsoever of Umapati. According to this work's kuruvanakkam,[250] Namaccivaya's line originated with Siva's imparting the Civananapotam to Nanti on Kailasa. After Nanti, Meykantar of Tiruvennainallur is cited. The next individual named is Aruli Cittar Civapirakacam, who resided in a kukai (cave; residence of an ascetic). Namaccivaya, the founder of the line at Tiruvavatuturai came from among his followers. The same omission of Umapati is repeated in other works.

This omission is no proof that Umapti was not part of the Saiva Siddhanta tradition's history, for that idea would indeed be troublesome today, as members of today's lineage at Tiruvavatuturai plainly state that the linga used by Umapati for his personal worship sits in Tiruvavatuturai's puja cell. Rather the omission tells us that no major importance was attached to Umapati in Tiruvavatuturai's most early definitions of its tradition. There is evidence to suggest both that Namaccivaya resided at Citamparam[251] prior to his coming to Tiruvavatuturai and that Tiruvavatuturai's connections with Citamparam

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[249] Sri Tatcinamurttitecikar, Tacakariyam, edited by Ca. Tantapanitecikar (Pantaracattiram. Tacakariyam, Tiruvavatuturai, 1959), pp. 55-76.

[250] ibid., p. 55.

[251] The Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, p. 57, states that Namaccivaya was ordered by his guru to do service at Citamparam. An inscription from Citamparam (A.R.E. 1913, no. 349) tells us that the Vijayanagara king Vekatadeva-Maharaya (1586-1614) provided for a feeding of Saiva mendicants (paradesi) in saka 1510. This provision was placed under the management of Namaccivaya-Utaiyar, the superintendent of all services (kattalai atikaram). The date of this inscription coincides with the time Namaccivaya lived.

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were fortified after Namaccivaya took up residence at Tiruvavatuturai.[252] But this material connects Tiruvavatuturai with Citamparam, rather than with Umapati. Early references to the seminal figures simply cite Namaccivaya, Meykantar, and Nanti, yes, always Nanti on Mount Kailasa. We have a good idea as to who Namaccivaya and Meykantar were, but who was Nanti?

The Santana of Nantikeca

Among the paintings depicting the story of the beginnings of the lineage that hang on the walls of the pujamantapa of Dharmapuram is an image of a four-armed Siva giving teachings to an anthropomorphic figure with a bull's head.[253] The caption under the painting explains that it shows Nanti receiving upatesam from Lord Siva on Mount Kailasa. This painting and others like it[254] seem to suggest that the present occupants of the Saiva velala matas tend to identify the Nantitevar from whom their lineage descends with Siva's vehicle, the bull. There is, however, other material which suggests that Nanti was seen as the eponymous preceptor of a larger tradition of teachings that the later

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[252] See the end of Chapter Four, below.

[253] Photographs of these paintings are reproduced in Sirkali Mahakumpapicekamalar (Dharmapuram: 1961).

[254] A facsimile of a painting of Mount Kailasa with an image of Siva giving instruction to Nandidevar with bull's head appears on the cover of Tarumai Kanakapikseka Vilamalar (Dharmapuram: 1961).

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velala lineages inherited.

In the concluding passage of the chapter on samayadiksa, the tenth century Agamic manual Acintyavisvasadakhya observes that the preceptor endows the initiate with five distinguishing characteristics.[255] Last on this list is the santana, which in the case of this text is identified as that of Nandikesa.[256] Helene Brunner-Lachaux has observed that the term santana, having the sense of "spiritual lineage", here refers to the ensemble of spiritual descendants of an original teacher. Nandikesa is the teacher cited in this early work.

A tradition attached to the temple at Tiruvaiyaru, near Tanjavur, provides us with an account of Nantitevar.[257] This tradition comes from the puranic accounts of the temple which were composed in the sixteenth century.[258] Nirampa Alakiya Tecikar, a disciple of Kamalai Nanaprakacar, the same preceptor of the founder of the Dharmapuram Adhinam, produced a talapuranam of Tiruvaiyaru, as did Nanakkuttar, a

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[255] Helene Brunner-Lachaux, "Appendice I", Somasambhu, Troisieme partie, p. 666, citing Acintyavisvasadakhya. The five features are the matam, tree, gotra, gocara (district), and santana.

[256] ibid., p. 675-6.

[257] Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, pp. 6-12; a condensed version of the same account appears in Visvalinga Thambiran, Sri Panchanathiswaraswami Temple, Tiruvaiyaru (Dharmapuram: 1965), pp. 8-9.

[258] Visvalinga Thambiran, p. 8 and Mu. Arunacalam, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru. Patinarum Nurrantu Mutal Pakam (Mayuram: Kanti Vittiyalayam, 1977), pp. 196-201.

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disciple of Nirampa Alakiya Tecikar.[259] This puranic tradition recounts the story of Japesvara, a sage's foundling son, who through his severe penance received Siva's upatecam , whereupon he ascended to Kailasa to become the founder of the line of Saiva preceptors. According to this tradition, Nantitevar is the name this preceptor bears. In summary,[260] here is the account:

> Sage Silada being without progeny desired a son. He worshipped the Lord who commanded him to perform the putramesti sacrifice on the understanding that he would find a child placed in a box while he ploughed the sacred plot, but that the child would live up to the age of sixteen years only. Silada performed the sacrifice and discovered a box. He opened the box to find inside a divine form with four arms and three eyes with a moon on the crest. Immediately he was instructed to shut the box and reopen it. He did. Inside was a beautiful child. The sage named the boy Japesvara.
>
> By the age of fourteen years he had mastered the Vedas, the Agamas and the Sastras. His parents grew sad with the thought that he had only two more years to live. On learning the cause of their sadness, he went to Ayyarappar (Tiruvaiyaru) temple to undertake a severe penance by posting himself in the Brahma-Visnu tirtha. The water reptiles and fish fed themselves on his flesh, reducing him to a mere skeleton. Siva, accompanied by Umapati, then appeared, gave Japesvara nanatikkai (jnanadiksa) and the name Nanti, endowed him with his (Siva's) own form, and caused him to ascend to Mount Kailasa.[261] There

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259 Mu Arunacalam, ibid., p. 194ff, and K. Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, p. 204. Nanakuttar's work is known either as the Tiruvaiyarruppuranam or the Pancanatippuranam, The Puranam of the Five Rivers. Pancanati is another name of Tiruvaiyaru.

260 Summarized from the Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, pp. 6-12.

261 The Kuruparamparai Vilakkam's retelling of this account leaves out a section describing the sage's marriage. According to the talapuranam (Visvalinga Thambiran, p. 8), Siva appeared before him as he was undergoing severe penance in the tirtha at Tiruvaiyaru, sprinkled on him the five waters [Tiruvaiyaru represents five sacred rivers, Suryapuskarani, Gangatirtha, Candrapuskarani or Amrtanadi, Palaru, and

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Siva appointed him head of the attendants of Siva and gave him the honour of guarding the main gate. Srikanta gave him instructions in the Vedas and Agamas, and gave him the title "the penultimate Siva" (aparacivan).

Then one day he turned to Srikanta with a question. Observing that the Saivagamas were the essence of the Vedas, he wanted to know how it was that their four paths (jnana, kriya, carya, and yoga) were treated differently in different agamas. He wanted to know which was true. Srikanta explained that for each eon (kalpa), there were different paths, and that these paths were contextual.

Whoever was initiated should conform to the stipulations of that path. But when it came to the ultimate knowledge (jnana), there was no difference. When the different agamas spoke of the four padas, there was no contradiction.

Nanti was then instructed with an exegesis of twelve verses of the Rauravagama,[262] and told to instruct those who would listen. Thus Srikanta imparted the Civananapotam to Nanti whose doubts were clarified.

When the sons of Brahma (Sanatkumara and others) came to know that Nanti had achieved such clarity of knowledge, they came to Mount Kailasa and asked Siva for teachings. Siva gave Nanti the mandate to teach. So Nanti dispensed the teachings to them and caused the line of preceptors (guru santana) to flourish. He also taught the sages, devas, the hordes of Siva and others.

Thus Nanti holds the office of protecting Kailasa, he is at the head of the hordes of Siva, he possesses Siva's own form, and through his teachings to Sanatkumara, and so on, the line of

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Nandivainoraitirtha or Nanditirtha, which are said to have been created for Nandi's abhisekam], restored his body to its original unimpaired condition and blessed him with the traditional sixteen gifts. Japesvara was then married to Svayamprakasa, the grand daughter of Vasistha and the daughter of Panguni when the punarpusa constellaton was ruling. Then later he ascended to Mount Kailasa, where he received initiation and the name, Nanti, and became the first of the line of Saiva Siddhanta preceptors.

262 This reference to the Civananapotam as an exegesis of the Rauravagama was apparently not troublesome to the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam in the early part of this century, as it appears in the Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, an official publication of the traditional history of the centre.

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Saiva preceptors has flourished.

The story of Nantitevar has several significant elements. It acknowledges differences among Agamic teachings, but authenticates all of them. Despite variations in dispensation, the teachings have a common source. Lineage transmission features prominently; fidelity to the teachings one receives through initiation is extolled by Srikanta. The account also juxtaposes the idea of a Tamil character of the teachings with northern origins.

Japesvara's place of origin is not mentioned in the versions presented by my sources, but it is to Tiruvaiyaru, a temple site known as South Kailasa, that he goes to perform his penance. Making Tiruvaiyaru the point of departure for the kailasa paramparai roots the lineage and its teachings firmly in Tamil soil; the lineage descends from Mount Kailasa, but the first preceptor ascends from the Tamil land. The origins of the lineage are paradoxically both North and South Indian. This rooting of the teachings in Tamil soil echoes an earlier story that has a very similar meaning.

The account comes from the cycle of stories about Tirunavukkaracar, more commonly known as Appar,[263] who coincidentally

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[263] The story is recorded in Cekkilar's Tirutontarpuranam. I took the account I summarize below from a prose rendering of Cekkilar's work, in B. Irattinanayakar, Cekkilar Cuvamikal Arulcceyt Tiruttontarkal Carittiramennum Periyapuranam. Vacanakaviyam (Cennai:n.d.), pp. 164-212. I will cite this work hereafter as Periyapuranam. The verses Appar sung at Tiruvaiyaru that inspired Cekkilar's writings are reproduced in K. M. Venkataramiah, "Selections from the Thevaram of Tirunaavukkarasar" in Sivan Arul Thirattu. Thevaram Thiruvasagam Thiruppugazh and Thiruarutpa. Life Sketches of the Six

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happened to be a velala. Whether that fact is significant is hard to say, but the early hagiographers always noted it. In the opening lines on his verses on Appar in his very short Tiruttontar Purana Caram,[264] Umapati draws immediate attention to Appar's velala parentage.

Just like Nantitevar, Appar's perseverance grants him an experience of Mount Kailasa that is connected with the Tiruvaiyaru temple, but Appar's experience has him going in the opposite direction:

> Tirunavukkaracar was at Kalahasti worshipping at the sacred feet of Kannappar, an earlier nayanar. There he felt a desire to see the magnificent sight of Siva on Mount Kailasa. He went north, worshipping at Srisailam, and then to Kasi where he worshipped Visvanath. He continued northwards subsisting on roots and fruits, travelling day and night. As his feet became cracked and sore, he crawled on his hands, then on his elbows, and finally along the full length of his body, which began to bleed. Still he was determined to reach Kailasa.
>
> Then he encountered a sage engaged in austerities who challenged his determination. When Appar satisfactorily demonstrated his resolve, he heard a voice from the sky telling him to rise up. He did and his wasted body was restored. Appar then recognized that the sage was Siva himself, but protested that he had been denied his vision of Siva in Kailasa. Siva responded by telling Appar that he had to continue singing his praises [implying that it was not time yet for Appar's departure from the world], but that he would be granted the vision he so desired at Tiruvaiyaru. Siva then told Appar to immerse himself in a nearby tank. Appar did and popped out of the small tank at Tiruvaiyaru. There he had a vision of Siva seated majestically with Uma at his side and Nandi in attendance. He was overcome with bliss. When the vision was withdrawn, he went into a a delirium, but then realized that he had truly experienced grace.

This earlier story of the Periyapuranam shows Appar most

Great Saints and Selected Songs With Transliteration, Tamil Paraphrase Notes and Rendering into English (Madras:1981).

[264] Venkataramiah, ibid., p. i.

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determined to obtain a vision of Lord Siva on Mount Kailasa. Meriting a vision of the lord's abode is a recurrent theme in South Indian Saivism. Sight of the lord's dwelling place is a rare privilege associated with religious grace (arul) and there are many examples in Tamil literature of struggling devotees yearning to be recipients of this grace. What is important here about Appar's story is that while he merited this vision while struggling in his climb to Mount Kailasa, he was granted it only when standing on Tamil soil. While not denying any possible North Indian connections to Appar's religiosity, this story most emphatically affirms a South Indian dimension to his experience.[265]

The story of Nantitevar, and thus of the beginning of the line of Saiva Siddhanta preceptors, has similar qualities. This lineage begins with heroic effort within a South Indian temple complex, and then shifts scenes so that the lineage may descend from Mount Kailasa. It is the kailasa paramparai, but according to this story at least, the Tamil

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[265] Ati Amavacai (the noon moon day of the Tamil month of Ati), the date on which Appar was granted this vision of Siva on Kailasa is an important day for the Dharmapuram Adhinam. The centre celebrates a short festival on that date to commemorate two events, Appar's vision and also the vision of Kailasa granted to the 25th preceptor of the lineage and predecessor of the present kurumakacannitanam. He undertook a pilgrimage to Kailasa in 1959 and afterwards, to commemorate the vision and share the grace he received through it, he organized a festival on that date which has been celebrated at Dharmapuram annually since then. According to a bibiographic sketch (Co. Cinkaravelan, "Panpunalankal", in Srilasri Kayakaik Kurumani Ninaivu Malar, Dharmapuram, 1973, p. 58) of the 25th kurumakacannitanam, his inspiration for the pilgrimage came at the Tiruvaiyaru Savia temple complex, when he was taking darsana of Tenkailaya, or Southern Kailasa, a shrine within the complex that houses an image of Appar. There, according to the account, Vatakayilayanatan, the deity of the shrine known as North Kailasa gave a boon to the 25th Gurumahasannidhanam that his desire to see Mount Kailasa would be fulfilled. So he undertook the pilgrimage, leaving Dharmpuram on June 19, 1959.

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experience is prior to that descent. Why Tiruvaiyaru is the temple chosen for this experience is difficult to say. Perhaps it is because Tiruvaiyaru features so prominently in Appar's story; perhaps it is for other reasons that are opaque to us now. As the Dharmapuram Adhinam now administers the affairs of the temple at Tiruvaiyaru,[266] it is understandable that the story locating the origins of the Kailasaparamparai at a place within Dharmapuram's circle of influence should appear in one of its publications,[267] but Tiruvavatuturai has no such connection with Tiruvaiyaru at present. Yet, clear reference to Tiruvaiyaru appears in an early twentieth century publication[268] of the traditional history of Tiruvavatuturai's preceptors. The Report of (South Indian) Epigraphy of 1925[269] notes that the management of the temple at Tiruvavatuturai seems to have been vested in the hands of a certain Sadasiva Bhataram of a matam located at Tiruvaiyaru during the time of Rajaraja I. Once again, the coincidence is intriguing, and suggests that the story preserves a distant memory of some connection

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[266] Visvalinga Thambiran, Sri Panchanathiswaraswami Temple, Tiruvaiyaru (Dharmapuram: 1965), p 12, notes that the temple is one of the 27 devastanams and kattalais belonging to the Dharmpurram Adhinam. Dharmapuram's head is the sole hereditary trustee of the temple complex.

[267] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[268] Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, pp. 6-12; see n. above.

[269] A.R.E. 1925, p. 82, par. 13. This report cites an inscription from Tiruvaiyaru (173 of 1925) which states that Sadasivan Bhataram of a matam at Tiruvaiyaru was appointed as supervisor of the Gomuktisvara temple at Tiruvavatuturai. It is unclear to me whether this supervision entailed financial management of endowments to the temple or an overseeing of the activities of the temple priests and others involved in the maintenance of the temple's ritual cycle.

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between this resident of a matam at Tiruvaiyaru and the predecessors of Tiruvavatuturai's and Dharmapuram's kailasa paramparai.

Origins of the Meykantar Lineage

It is, however, not really clear who these predecessors were. Our eponymous Nanti may very well be the founder of the lineage, but verses from works produced by the tampiran of Tiruvavatuturai, such as Sri Civayananayokikal's "Kurumarapu Valttu",[270] Cuntaralinka Munivar's Tirupperunturaippuranam,[271] and others firmly identify Namaccivaya's lineage with Meykantar. The questions of how this lineage and its ensuing institutions developed from Meykantar's time, which we can date to the thirteenth century, up to the sixteenth century, the time in which both Tiruvavatuturai's and Dharmapuram's founders lived, are not

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[270] Civananayokikal, "Kurumarapu Valttu" in Pantaraccattiram (Tiruvavatuturai:1966), vol. 9, p. viii):

> Let come to mind the one who is truth filled,
> The one from Vennainallur,
> Who showed the path of wisdom of
> The Civananapotam of the Kailasaparamparai.
> To his lineage, the most ancient of them all,
> Was verily the true heir
> Namaccivaya of Tiruvavatuturai,
> A place full of groves where birds sing.

[271] In the verses paying homage to the gurus (kuruvanakkam) in his Tirupperunturaippuranam (edited by Ca. Palacuntaram, Tancavur, Caracuvati Makal, 1976, vs. 17, p. 6), Tiruvavatuturai's Cuntaralinka Munivar praises Pancakkaramurti (Namaccivaya) as a jewel in the line of Meykantar of Vennainallur. In earlier verses, Cuntaralinka Munivar also pays homage to the nayanmar (vss. 10-14, pp. 5-6) and he offers his head to the feet of Nanti (vs. 8, p. 4), whom he identifies as standing guard at the hill of Kailasa.

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easily answered. With the exception of Meykantar, inscriptional evidence for the members of the acaryasantana is not readily forthcoming. An inscription dated to 1232[272] makes reference to a Tiruvennainallur Meykantar, who is generally accepted to be the Meykantar of the Saiva Siddhanta lineages. There is an inscription dated to the early 13th century which mentions a matatipati (head of a matam) by the name of Marainanacampantar,[273] but this date is too early for the preceptor of Umapati, who is dated to the beginning of the 14th century.

Reference to a Meykantar lineage does not appear in epigraphical records until the fifteenth century. An inscription from Tiruputtur, Ramanathapuram district, states that one Tiruvampalamutiayar Marainanacampantar of the Meykantar lineage who was residing in the matam of the village received a specified measure out of the temple lands for having composed a talapuranam, the Onkukoyilpuranam.[274] An inscription dating thirty years later[275] from Tiruvannamalai also provides a gift of land in recompense for the composition of a work, the Iracaippuranam in this case. The recipient is identified as the disciple of Catyiyananataracani, again of the Meykantar lineage.

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[272] E.I., vol. VII, p. 208, dated to the 16th regnal year of Rajaraja III, mentions a Tiruvennainallur Meykantatevan making an endowment to a Siva temple near Tiruvannammalai.

[273] A.R.E., no. 522 of 1909.

[274] A.R.E. no. 180 of 1935-6; dated 1484 CE.

[275] A.R.E. no. 485 of 1937-8, dated 1510 CE.

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Another reference comes from Kanchipuram,[276] where a teacher by the name of Mainanamamuni, a disciple of Nanatecikar, is mentioned. Finally, there is mention of a disciple of the lineage, Sattaipperumal Dhanakuttan, who had the tasks of writing out the accounts of the matam, making arrangements for the recitation of hymns in the presence of the deity and supervising the supply of flower garlands to the god.[277]

This last epigraph lists some of the functions assumed by members of the later velala lineages. Two of the others also mention the production of talapuranas, works that extol the auspiciousness of temple sites. Members of the later velala lineages were quite active in producing such works; the composition of a talapurana appears to have been one way in which temple sites drew in important and wealthy patrons, which in turn provided prestige and material benefit to those attached to the sites. While none of the individuals mentioned appears in either Tiruvavatuturai's or Dharmapuram's accounts of their founders' lines, some of the names, such as Tiruvampala, Marainanacampantar, and Catyiyananataracani, which I assume to be diksa names, are used by the later preceptors of the kailasa paramparai. That connection may well be circumstantial, however.

The relatively late date at which reference to a Meykantar lineage appears may indicate how the members of certain spiritual lineages wanted to identify themselves at this stage in South Indian history. The traditional count of Saiva Siddhanta teachers gives us a

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276 A.R.E. no. 207 of 1936-7; dated 15th century.

277 A.R.E. no. 202 of 1935-6, dated 1546 CE.

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brief glimpse of redefined history: the velala lineages claim membership in the kailasa paramparai which they trace to a Nantikesa, a preceptor cited in a tenth century Sanskrit manual, the Acintyavisvesa, but at the same time they steadfastly hold to the claim that a Tamil preceptor, Meykantar, is the beginning of their earthy (or is it Tamil?) line. Then they add a sivacarya, a cittar, and a diksitar brahmin to the mix.

I suspect from the material I have examined that these competing claims reflect the different sources that contributed to the development of the velala lineages and their institutions. I will turn now to that material. My purpose in the discussion which follows is not to give definitive answers to the questions of where and how the velala lineages originated, for I believe those questions are unanswerable given our present state of evidence. Instead, my purpose here is to discern patterns which I believe give us clues to the sources of the lineages and their institutions.

I will focus my discussion by first looking at the information we have about earlier religious figures who were established at Tiruvavatuturai and who may have had some connection with the later matam. I will concentrate on two Saivite mystics (cittar) whose camati shrines are still places of worship for the later Saiva Siddhantins. The first figure is Tirumular. The other is Tirumalikaittevar, whose camati is within arm's reach of that of Namaccivaya in the matam. Then I will examine information about earlier Saiva lineages, as there is some resemblance between their patterns of settlement and that of the later velala lineages. The point I am making especially in the latter

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part of this discussion is that the institutional form the velala lineages took in their internal organization, their roles in temple affairs, and their networks of settlement seem to have been strongly influenced by the earlier Saiva lineages in the same area which had North Indian origins.

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CHAPTER FOUR

TIRUMULAR AND TIRUMALIKAITTEVAR

The presence of what is accepted by all Saivites to be Tirumular's camati testifies to the importance of Tiruvavatuturai as a sacred site from very early times. This shrine stands alone as a separate structure just to the north-west of the Macilamani temple, or on the opposite side of the temple to the present matam. The Tirumantiram, attributed to Tirumular, makes up the tenth work of the Tirumurai, the Saiva canon;[278] it is thought to be one of the earliest works in this collection. Estimates of the dating of the Tirumantiram range from the late sixth or early seventh century[279] to the ninth century.[280] Tirumular is one of the nayanmar whose hagiographies are

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[278] There are various editions of the Tirumantiram. For my purposes, I used an early critical edition by V.V. Ramanacastri (Cennai: 1910); other editions include the text with notes by A. Citamparanar and commentary by Pa. Iramanata Pillai, (Tirunelveli and Madras: South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing House, 1st edition 1942, revised 1957 and 1962); see also Kamil Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, p. 138. According to Periyapuranam, Tirunanacampantar, a later nayanmar, discovered the Tirumantiram in the temple at Tiruvavatuturai.

[279] Kamil Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, p. 138 dates Tirumular to the late 6th or early 7th century.

[280] K. Sivaraman, personal communication, suggests that the work dates as late as the ninth century. He supports this suggestion with the observations that the language used by Tirumular is closer to that

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recorded by Cekkilar in his Periyapuranam; material on Tirumular constitutes twenty-eight stanzas in this work.

The account of Tirumular's life provided by Cekkilar is highly legendary.[281] According to the Periyapuranam,[282] Tirumular's original name was Cuntaranatan. He was a cittar on Mount Kailasa, a disciple of Nantitevar, the same Nanti from whom the lineage descends at both Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram. One day he decided to travel south to join his friend Akastiyar (Skt. Agastya); en route he stopped off at the major Saiva sites including Kasi, Tirukalatti, Srisailam, Tiruvorriyur, Citamparam, and others.

Near Tiruvavatuturai he came across the body of a cowherd (mular) who had just expired. Overcome with compassion for the cows and aided by the grace of Siva, he was able to hide his own body in the hole of a pipal tree and take on the body of the cowherd. At nightfall, he led the herd home, but when the wife of the cowherd approached him, he rejected her and took refuge in a matam. Later, when he returned to

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of the eleventh century Tiruvicaippa than to the archaic Tamil of the earliest material of the Tevaram. He also notes that the Tirumantiram uses more Sanskritized words than do the earlier works. Since Cuntarar, who dates to the end of the 8th or early 9th century, mentions Tirumular, he can be no later than Cuntarar's time.

281 Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, p. 138. Tirumular is discussed in the Cekkilar's Periyapuranam. He is earlier mentioned in Cuntiramurti's Arur Tiruttontaittokai 5 (Tevaram 39), as one of the 63 Saiva saints, and also by Nampi Antar Nampi in his Tiruttontar tiruvantati, stanza 36.

282 I have followed a prose rendering (Periyapuranam Vacanakaviyam (Cennai: B. Irattinanayakar, n.d., pp. 358-61) for this account. The general outline of the story also appears in Mariasusai Dhavamony, Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta: A Study in the Mysticism and Theology of Saivism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 127, and elsewhere.

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recover his own body, he found it had disappeared. Understanding it to be Siva's will that he bring the message of the Saivagamas to Tamilnatu, he remained as Tirumular, for others also had realized something extraordinary had happened to the cowherd. Staying at Tiruvavatuturai, he took up yogic posture just outside the temple, and at a rate of one verse a year for three thousand years, composed the Tirumantiram.

The story introduces Tirumular as coming from North India, an idea which some modern South Indian Saivites find objectionable,[283] though Cekkilar and others of the fourteenth century did not. In his saints' lives, Cekkilar sent other nayanmar[284] north to Kailasa, though only Tirumular came south. As we will see below, there is much material, epigraphical as well as legendary, from this early period that claims northern origins for saints and ascetics who moved through Tamil country.

Both Tirumular and the Tirumantiram hold an odd position with respect to the beginnings of the Saiva Siddhanta tradition. Tirumular is today nowhere as important as some of the other nayanmar in popular imagination and apparently never was. As Vidya Dehejia points out,[285]

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[283] In addition to the language issue, the problem also relates to antagonism between brahmin and non-brahmin. In this connection the Turaicaippuranam makes a statement that contemporary members of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam might find contentious. The puranam (p. 293) observes that Tirumular had the sense faculties of a brahmin, but the physical features of a cowherd.

[284] Cekkilar records a pilgrimage to Mount Kailasa undertaken by the very early (6th century) poetess, Karaikkal Ammaiyar; the story of Appar that I recounted above is also from Cekkilar.

[285] Vidya Dehejia, Slaves of the Lord: The Path of the Tamil Saints (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Private Ltd, 1988), p. 79.

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the Tirumantiram was not set to music and the image of Tirumular never appears alone, but only as part of the complete group of nayanmar. Yet the Tirumantiram lays down the framework of a philosophical system that flourished later as Saiva Siddhanta.[286] Though abstruse and unsystematic, the work reflects the philosophical tradition of the Saiva agamas, and indeed, the Tirumantiram describes itself as an agama.[287] Unlike the hymns of the Tevaram, for example, which celebrate Appar's, Cuntaramurti's and Tirunanacampantar's experiences at the holy shrines of Siva, the Tirumantiram is a "manual of Saiva mysticism in [just over] 3,000 verses."[288] dealing with such topics as mantra, internal cakras, diksa, the subtle body, and the role of the guru.[289] The works of the

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[286] K. Sivaraman, Saivism in its Philosophical Perspective, p. 31, observes, "Tirumular's Triumantiram is the earliest exposition of Saiva Siddhanta in its metaphysical, moral and mystical aspects and the work describes itself as an agama...The work is very abstruse and defies systematic understanding...Tirumular shows acquaintance with Tantricism of different shades and also with innumerable sects and schools of Saivism but there is no evidence of an attempt to incorporate them into Saiva Siddhanta. Saiva Siddhanta does not emerge in clearly demarcated lines in relation to the Tantra and the Saiva schools of faith."

[287] Ibid.

[288] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1966, 3rd ed.), p. 369. V.A. Devasenapathi, Saiva Siddhanta as Expounded in the Sivajnana-Siddiyar and its Six Commentaries (Madras: University of Madras, 1974), p. 2, speaks of the Tirumantiram as an early philosophical work, distinguishing it from the devotional utterances of the Saiva saints.

[289] The Tirumantiram is divided into nine parts, called tantras. M. Rajamanickam, The Development of Saivism in South India (A.D. 300-1300) pp. 60-86, provides a description of its contents. The first tantra makes general observations about duty; the second tantra recounts puranic tales related to Siva. The third tantra discusses yoga, the sixteen kalas, techniques of conquering one's own body, and several other topics; the fourth tantra takes up mantra and also describes the

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other nayanmar document their experiences as bhaktas, while the Tirumantiram sets forth the metaphysics of the system. Clearly agamic in approach, it is the first Tamil work to engage this material; the theological formulations it offers are what, in general, are professed by the later proponents of Saiva Siddhanta. The term caivacittantam (saiva siddhanta) appears in an extant work for the first time in the Tirumantiram when Tirumular discusses four groups of Saivas and defines "pure Saivism" (cutta caivam) as knowledge of cittantam in relation to vedanta. The work states that Saiva Siddhantins are those who have passed through and perfected themselves in the paths of carya, kriya, yoga and nana, and realized the supreme lord.[290]

The importance of makecuvarapucai (Skt. mahesvarapuja, the feeding of the assembly of devotees), a key feature of the present matas' rites, is also mentioned in the work. Several passages rank this rite above other conventional forms of dana: "Mahesvaras will besmear their bodies with the sacred ash; those who consider them as Siva and

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various cakras. Diksa features in the fifth tantra, which discusses carya, kriya, yoga and nana as well as different Saiva traditions. In the sixth tantra, the relationship between Siva and his devotees is discussed. The seventh tantra relates material on a number of different topics, including classifications of lingas, a description of the guru, worship that is performed to Siva who resides in the soul, worship to Siva who resides in the guru, worship of the devotees of Siva, and different kinds of yogins. The eighth and ninth tantras likewise deal with a range of topics, including an explanation of pati, pasu, pacam and realization.

[290] Tirumantiram vss. 1420-22, 1429; cited in M. Rajamanickam, pp. 72-4 and 281. Vs. 1437, cited in A. Viswanathan, An Analysis of the Tirumantiram by a Science Graduate (Jaffna: Saiva Paripalana Sabhai, 1967), p. 149-50. Some scholars have suggested that verse 1421 which describes saiva siddhantins is an interpolation.

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worship them will get all benefits; to feed them in the daytime is more benficial than building a thousand temples."[291] and "giving day-food to Mahesvaras will yield more benefits than granting a thousand agaras or agraharas (dwelling places of Brahmins)."[292]

Yet, the early dating and theological agreement notwithstanding, the work is not reckoned as part of the Saiva Siddhanta canon. It has been recognized as an important work, providing foundation for the later Saiva Siddhanta philosophical tradition,[293] but the work is not counted as one of the Saiva Siddhanta sastras. The same may be said of the other works of the Tirumurai, but why the Tirumantiram was seemingly neglected and why the Saiva Siddhanta tradition allies itself most closely with works that date only after Cekkilar[294] raise a number of important questions that, in light of the present material, should be addressed, however briefly. The tone of the

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[291] Vss. 537, 1862 & 1860, cited in Rajamanickam, pp. 82-3. The twenty-third chapter of the seventh tantra (Tirumantiram, pp. 666) deals with mahesvarapuja.

[292] Vs. 1860.

[293] This attitude is represented today in works such as V.K. Palasuntharam, "Souls are Beginningless: This Has always Been a Fundamental Tenet of Saiva Siddhanta" (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Selangor/Wilayah Persekutuan Ceylon Saivites Association, 1983), p. 51.
In an extremely dense mapping out of collateral spiritual kin groups (cantana) among the Saivas, the eighteenth century Nanavarana Vilakkamum Mapatiyamum by Tiruvelliyampalavanattampiran of Dharmapuram locates Tirumular in a parallel lineage to his own. In this work, Tiruvelliyampalavanattampiran also cites several verses of the Tirumantiram that are no longer extant.

[294] Cekkilar's Periyapuranam dates around 1135 C.E. (Zvelebil, p. 134); Tiruvuntiyar, the first of the fourteen Saiva Sastras dates around 1148 C.E. Meykantar dates to the early thirteenth century.

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matas' later poetic works[295] suggests that the religiosity of the Saiva centres was informed by the hymns of the nayanmar, but their scholastic tradition paid little attention to this material. To the best of my knowledge, up to the twentieth century[296] no work coming from any of the

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[295] It would be a thesis in itself to show the ways in which the devotional expressions of the nayamar figure in the poetics of the later velala lineages. A few examples of devotional poetics include Dharmapuram's Kurunanacampantar's Cokkanata kalitturai, Tiruppanantal's Kumarakuruparar's Kantar Kalivenpa and Citampara Mummani Kovai. Many of the works make explicit reference to the nayanmar. In his Pantara Mummani Kovai (P. Mutharasu, Life and Works of Saint Kumara Guruparar Swamigal, pp 40-50), for example, Kumarakuruparar hails his preceptor, Dharmapuram's Macilamanitecikar, as the boy saint Tirunanacampantar in ripe old age. In the invocation verses of the Tiruperunturaippuranam (Tancavur: Caracuvati Makal Nul Nilayam: 1976), Tiruvavatuturai's Cuntaralinka Munivar pays obeisance to the Tirunanacampantar, Tirunavukkaracar, Cuntaramurti, Manikkavacakar, and the rest of the sixty-three nayanmar (pp. 4-5).

[296] In the 1940's and early 50's, the Tiruvavatuturai Atinam brought out a number of monographs, conference proceedings, and even commentaries of the text. Likewise Dharmapuram also has published a three volume text critical edition and detailed commentary written by Mahavituvan Arunai Vativel Mutaliar.

The Tirumantiram has garnered quite a bit of attention from the Saivite groups in the past ten years as a result of several treatises circulated by a group known as the Saiva Siddhanta Church or the Kauai Aadheenam, located in Hawaii. This "church" was founded in 1957 by a Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, an American who had previously received teachings from Siva Yogaswami, the head of a line of Saiva Siddhanta preceptors in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. In 1982, the group produced a treatise entitled, "There Can Only Be One Final Conclusion: An Assessment of Two Schools of Saiva Siddhanta, Their Founders, Their Views of Creation and the Ultimate Goals They Postulate", and mailed it to Saiva Siddhanta centres in South India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and elsewhere. This monograph argued that there were two schools of Saiva Siddhanta, the earlier monistic school codified by Tirumular and Meykantar's pluralistic school, and concluded that the correct teachings were those of Tirumular. Several of the Saiva Siddhantins contacted responded with counter statements, such as "Souls are Beginningless: This Has Always Been a Fundamental Tenet of Saiva Siddhanta" by V.K. Palasuntharam of the Selangor/Wilayah Persekutuan Ceylon Saivites Association of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. These responses noted among other things that the Hawaii group completely misinterpreted Tirumular's work, which they had consulted only in an English translation, B. Nataraj, Tirumular,

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matas systematically explored the Tirumantiram.

The scholastic tradition of the matas worked within fairly close boundaries, generating commentaries and treatises that took in account not only works such as the Civananacittiyar, but also to some extent the Saivagamas themselves; as to why the Tirumantiram is not included in this commentarial tradition is to me an important question. Perhaps it relates to genre, or the abstruseness of the work, or perhaps to teaching traditions, in which Tirumular, as a distant - or mythic - preceptor, does not figure, even though the lines of Tirumular and Meykantar alike claim descent from Nanti. In the authorship verse of the autocommentary (vartikka) of the Civananapotam,[297] it states that Meykantan has composed, with explanations and illustrations, the book [Civananapotam] on nana as preached by Nanti. This verse links his

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Tirumantiram, Holy Hymns (Madras: ITES Pulbications: 1982).

After a delegation of the Hawaii group met with the Selangor/Wilayah Perkutuan Ceylon Saivites Association in Malaysia in July 1983, the Hawaii group followed up in January 1984 with a brochure entitled "Monism and Pluralism in Saiva Siddhanta", which in turn led to more counter-response. That spring, the Dharmapuram Adhinam convened the First International Seminar on Saiva where T.N. Arunachalam of Dharmapuram presented excerpts from his ninety-eight page treatise, "There Can Be Only One Final Conclusion in Saiva Siddhantam: Dharmapura Adhinam's Reply to the Hawaii Saivites" and V.K. Palasuntharam discussed his fifty-nine page work, "There Has Always Been Only a Pluralistic Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy: A Reply to Hawaii Saivism's Brochure on Monism and Pluralism". The debate has continued in two other seminars, one in Malaysia in 1986 and another in India in 1989.

297 Siva Gnana Potham of Sri Meykanda Deva (13th Century). The Saiva Siddhanta Sutras & Commentary, translated into English by H.R. Hoisington, edited with preface, notes and text appendices in Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada and French by N. Murugesa Mudaliar (Dharmapuram: 1979), colophon, p.p. 123-4.

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lineage with Tirumular's, who cites Nanti as his guru.[298] In the Guruparampariyam of the Tirumantiram, Tirumular depicts a mystical and highly personal relationship with Nanti:

> With grace, he accepted me
> As a disciple of Siva.
> He took three oceans of bonds and
> Fixed his feet on my heart, my head.
>
> He received my body, my possessions and soul
> With water [through abhisekam], so the multiplying karma
> Be uprooted. Through sight [a form of initiation], through
> touch [another form of initiation],
> The guru gave me the secret knowledge.
>
> The one who has engaged me personally,
> His golden feet planted inside my very essence (buddhi).
> When I contemplate the holy form of Nanti, I am
> Reverberating with his name, thus is my truth.[299]

The traditions of the Saiva centres, however, stand fast on Meykantar's receipt of Nanti's teachings through the celestial Paranjotimamunivar, which make Meykantar the first human teacher of his line.[300] Exactly why is a question that is not easily answered, given

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[298] Tirumantiram, vss. 77-82, pp. 16-7. In first of these verses, Tirumular observes that there are eight individuals who have been blessed by the grace of Nanti. Along with the four nantis, apparently referring to the four sons of Brahma, Canakar, Canantar, Canakarar, Canarkumarar, Tirumular cites Civamamunivar, Patanjali, Vikraka, and himself as the direct descendants of Nanti. Cekkilar likewise states that Tirumular was taught on Mount Kailasa by Nanti who then sent him south (Periyapuranam vacanam, p. 358).

[299] Tirumantiram, vss. 79, 80 and 82.

[300] A verse from the Perunkatai cited by Nilakanta Sastri, History of South India, p. 382, links the revealed works of Veda and Agama to the historical works of the poet-saints and the preceptors:

> The Veda is the cow;

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our present state of information about the period. Caste background, Tamil identity, locality of birth make Meykantar an appealing figure; so do his dates.

The boundaries of the commentarial tradition are drawn at about the middle of the twelfth century when it comes to "historical" works, works with declared human authorship, such as the Meykantar's Civananapotam. K. Sivaraman has discussed the emergence of the Saiva Siddhanta sastra in this period. He notes that it developed out of the tradition of the Saivagama which was kept alive through the vogue of Upagama and its commentaries and also in independent manuals composed in Sanskrit.[301] The Civananapotam appears to have been immediately preceded by two kinds of works in Tamil. One type, unsystematic and mystical-theological, was a continuation of the agama tradition, the other type, shown in the works Tiruvuntiar and Tirukkalitruppatiar, follows a tradition of preceptor-student works, in which the student compiles a treatise elucidating the teacher's work.

Sivaraman observes that this teacher-student tradition of composition is typical of the Saiva Siddhanta sastra, which counts the

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> Its milk is the true Agama;
> The Tamil sung by the four [Appar, Tirunanacampantar, Cuntiramurti and Manikavacakar] is the ghee extracted from it;
> And the virtue of the Tamil work of Meykandan of the celebrated (city) of Vennai is the fine taste of ghee.

Whether Meykantar was truly the first preceptor is for me a moot question.

[301] K. Sivaraman, Saivism in Its Philosophical Perspective, pp. 31-33.

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Tiruvuntiar and the Tirukkalitruppatiyar as its earliest works.[302] Appropriate material for commentary was that which was inculcated through a line of preceptors. Members of the later velala lineages at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram composed both exegetical evaluations of the teachings in commentaries as well as poetic works. The commentaries are based on works from the Saiva Siddhanta sastra. Of a different sort, the poetics generated by these centres more closely resemble hymns from the Tirumurai, except that the focus of attention is most often the composer's immediate preceptor. When scholastic works are distinguished from poetic works, the commentarial tradition of the centres gives us some indication of the intellectual framework that defined the velala lineages' tradition. That framework, based on the Saiva Siddhanta sastra, supports no works earlier than the twelfth century.

Another observation is relevant. Though Tirumular has a very definite presence at Tiruvavatuturai, he does not figure whatsoever in the centre's account of its line. In contrast to trends found elsewhere in which famous figures are co-opted to enhance the lineage,[303] the keepers of the tradition at Tiruvavatuturai have expressed no interest in pushing their origins back to Tirumular. They know the present institution was founded by the sixteenth century Namaccivaya, and they are willing to take his line back through the legends of the earlier lineage preceptors (santanacarya) to Paramasiva Himself, but when it

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[302] Ibid., p. 34.

[303] See, for example, Richard Burghart, "The Founding of the Ramanandi Sect" in Ethnohistory, vol. 25, no. 2 (Spring 1978), pp. 121-139.

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comes to historical or quasi-historical figures, they draw the line at Meykantar, whose well-known story is about as legendary as they come.

This reticence suggests two things. First, contrary to popular Western understanding of Indian historicity, these lineages had some sense of appropriate history. As mythologized as the account is with regards to the very beginnings of the lineage, the tradition seems to have had some built-in restraints. The second point relates to the first. In the velala lineages' tradition, historical formation does not reach back much beyond the twelfth century, even though their religiosity does. The bhakti sentiments expressed by the nayanmar are very much repeated in the poetics produced by the residents of the matas. There is one importance difference, however. Whereas the nayanmar sing out devotion to Siva in his localized form at a particular site, the members of the matas find that locality most often in the form of their guru, namely the head of their lineage, who encompasses their institution and its historical structure. In other words, in the development of the mata tradition, the shape or structure of the institutions may have had a source different from that of their underlying theology, though both were merged together as the tradition unfolded. On evidence available, that institutional source appears to have been North Indian in part. I will turn to that material after I complete my discussion on Tirumalikaittevar.

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Tirumalikaittevar

In addition to Tirumular, there were other Saivite saints and mystics who stayed at Tiruvavatuturai. As noted above, the most honoured of the Tamil hymn-singers - Appar, Tirunanacampantar, Cuntaramurti, and Manikkavacakar - all left records of their worship in the Gomutisvara temple.[304] There were also others whose works and life-stories are not so famous. Of these, one saint in particular merits attention because of his connection with the matam at Tiruvavatuturai. This Saivite is Tirumalikaittevar. His camati is in the middle of the matam now occupied by the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam; in fact, Tirumalikaittevar's camati is within arm's reach of Namaccivaya's camati. The rest of this section will turn its attention to him. The discussion will first piece together what can be known about Tirumalikaittevar, and then explore what relationship there might be between him and the later centre at Tiruvavatuturai.

Like Tirumular, Tirumalikaittevar is no anonymous mystic. He is one of the even lesser-known poets of the Tamil Saivite canon. He is credited with composing four songs at Citamparam that make up the first section of Tiruvicaippa, part of the ninth book of the Tirumurai.[305] Tiruvicaippa is collection of twenty-eight songs, or hymns composed in

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[304] See Introduction and Cattiram Caminatamunivar, Turaicaippuranam, prose edition by Nanananta (Tiruvavatuturai: 1961), chapters 61-4, pp. 330-374.

[305] Tirumalikaittevar Mutaliya Onpatinmar Aruliceyta Tiruvicappa Tiruppallantu Onpatan Tirumurai, edited by Ci. Arunaivativel (Tarumapuram Atinam: 1969).

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musical modes, sung by nine poets[306] at temples mainly located along or near the Kaveri river in the present Tanjavur district.[307] Most of the work was probably composed in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries,[308] through there is some disagreement over the dates assigned to the individual poets.[309]

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306 The poets are Tirumalikaittevar, Centanar, Karuvurttevar, Punturutti Nampi, Kantaratittar, Venattatikal, Tiruvaliyamutanar, Purutottama Nampi, and Cetiriyar.

307 Many of these sites, such as Citamparam, Tiruvavatuturai, Tiruvitamarutur, Tiruvilimilalai, Tiruvarur, and Tiruppuvanam, are sites where the poets of the Tevaram sang. Other places such as Tirailokkiya Cuntaram and Kankaikontacolecuram do not feature in the Tevaram. The reason that Kankaikontacolecuram is not mentioned by the Tevaram and other works of the Tirumurai is because it was constructed by Rajendracola in the eleventh century and thus antedates the Tevaram.

308 M.A. Dorai Rangaswamy, The Religion and Philosophy of the Tevaram, vol. 1 (Madras: The University of Madras, 1959), p. 2, suggests that the work was compiled after the construction of Kankaikontacoleccuran. According to a traditional account given in the introduction of Tiruvicaippa, pp. viif, the first eight books of the Tirumurai were gathered by Nampi Antar Nampi a the behest of Rajaraja. Rajendra, Rajaraja's successor, then made a similar request that the hymns of other poets be gathered in a similar manner. This collection makes up the ninth Tirumurai. Other accounts of the compilation of the hymns appear in the Tirumuraikanta Puranam and Cekkilar Puranam attributed to Umapati (M.A. Dorai Rangaswamy, pp. 21ff). Dorai Rangaswamy points out that the king referred to in the Tirumuraikanta Puranam is most likely Atitya, and not Rajaraja, and also suggests that the collection of hymns as it now stands in the twelve books of the Tirumurai reflects several stages of accretion.

309 The dating of Centanar is fairly certain because several of his songs were sung at Kankaikontacolecuran (Gangaikontacolapuram). Mu. Arunacalam, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru, Tamilp Pulavar Varalaru, pattam nurrantu (Mayuram: 1972), p. 466, places Tirumalikaittevar in the tenth century on the basis of an epithet, nirani pavalakkuntame, that appears both in one of Tirumalikaittevar's poems and also in a temple inscription from the time of Rajaraja I. Kamil Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, p. 148, suggests that Tirumalikaittevar lived around the eleventh century. The hagiography of Tirumalikaittevar (see below) places Tirumalikaittevar at the time of the construction of Kankaikontacolapuram.

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The Tiruvicaippa has attracted relatively little attention outside of Tamil Saivite circles perhaps simply because it has been eclipsed by the more widely known and earlier works such as those of the Tevaram and Manikkavacakar's Tiruvacakam. Likewise, very little is known about the poets whose songs make up the anthology. None of them figures in the twelfth century Tiruttontarpuranam, Cekkilar's collection of hagiographies commonly known as the Periyapuranam, as the poets of the Tiruvicaippa lived later than Cuntaramurti, whose Tirutontattokai is the basis of Cekkilar's work.

Sources

What little information we have about Tirumalikaittevar comes mainly from sources dating several centuries after the Tiruvicaippa. The principal source of information is the eighteenth century Turaicaippuranam,[310] a talapuranam (Skt. sthalapurana, an account of a particular locality) that recounts the legendary history of Turaicai, or Tiruvavatuturai. This talapuranam was compiled by Cattiram Caminatamunivar, a tampiran of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam,[311] at a time

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[310] Cattiram Caminatamunivar, Turaicaippuranam, prose edition by Nanananta (Tiruvavatuturai: 1961). This prose version of the talapuranam was the only text I was able to obtain. No critical edition of the text was available.

[311] According to the Tiruvavatuturai Atinak Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, p. 155, Cattiram Caminatamunivar received initiation from Tiruvavatuturai's tenth preceptor, Sri Velappatecikar, but he composed the talapuranam during the rule of the twelfth head, Tiruccirrampalatecikar. Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 85, suggests that

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when the Saiva centres were producing numerous talapurana,[312] possibly for propaganda purposes. During this same period, the centres were being appointed as overseers of kattalais (endowments for temple services) at places as far away as Tiruccentur and Tiruperunturai,[313] the same places extolled in the talapuranas the tampiran of the centres were compiling.

Due to the gap of several centuries between the time when Tirumalikaittevar lived and the time when the Turaicaippuranam was compiled, any conclusions based on its material must be circumspect. There are likely earlier versions of this hagiography, but I have not located any of them.[314] In addition to the material from the

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the Turaicaippuranam was composed sometime during Tulajentira's rule in Tanjavur (1763-1787), as Cattiram Caminatamunivar also composed a Tiruperunturaippuranam which names Tulajentira as a benefactor.

[312] Kamil Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, pp. 218-32 and 243-53, discusses the puranas produced in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Many of these works were compiled by members of either Tiruvavatuturai or Dharmapuram. See also Tiruvavatuturai Atinak Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, pp. 115f.

[313] See Tiruvavatuturai Atinak Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, pp, 86-237, passim, for references to the talapuranas produced by Tiruvavatuturai. The centre often produced more than one work on the same site. On Tirupperunturai, for example, two talapurana were produced in the late 18th century. In addition to Cattiram Caminatamunivar's work mentioned above, Cuntiralinka Munivar also produced a Tirupperunturaippuranam (also called the (Kurippuraiyutan). This work has been published (Tancavur: Tancavur Makaraja Carapojiyin Caravati Makal Nul Nilaiyam, 1976).

[314] There are undoubtedly earlier accounts of Tirumalikaittevar's life, but I have not yet located them. Mu. Arunacalam, pp. 450-466, is apparently unaware of the talapuranam, or chooses to ignore it. He does not provide any earlier documentation on Tirumalikaittevar's life, apart from some references to Tirumalikaittevar's lineage, which will be discussed below.

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Turaicaippuranam, eight sets of verses from Tiruvavatuturai also make reference to Tirumalikaittevar; all are attributed Tottikkalaiccuppiramanyamunivar.[315] Of these verses, two are stray panegyrics, one is a listing of the miracles performed by Tirumalikaittevar, and five make up a work called the Tirumalikaittevar Tiruviruttankal. Tottikkalaiccuppiramanyamunivar was a resident of the atinam during the period of its eleventh and twelfth heads, thus he was contemporary with Cattiram Caminatamunivar, who composed the Turaicaippuranam duing the time of the twelfth kurumakacannitanam. I will return to the puranam and Tottikkalaiccuppiramanyamunivar's verses when I complete this review of sources.

Other sources on Tirumalikaittevar are quite sparse. The four hymns attributed to him, which were all sung at Citamparam, reflect the devotional, qualified non-dualistic theology that has come to be associated with Saiva Siddhanta; the material also shows little tolerance for non-Saivites.[316] The Agamic terms that appear in these hymns suggest he had some knowledge of Sanskrit. An epigraph from Tiruvilimilalai dated to the time of Rajaraja Cola refers to a civanani

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[315] Aracavanattu, p. 221, attributes these verses to Kacciyappamunicar, but on p. 106 of the same work, Tottikalaiccupiramaniyamunivar is credited with composing the Tirumalikaittevar Tiruviruttam during the time of Sri Pinvelappatecikar, the eleventh head of Tiruvavatuturai. The introduction to Turaicaippuranam , p. xxv; Tiruvavatuturai Atina Valaru, p. 66; Mu Arunacalam, p. 462; and other works credit Tottikalaiccupiramaniyamunivar with the verses.

[316] C. and H. Jesudan, History of Tamil Literature (Calcutta: 1960), p. 132, describes the material as so strongly intolerant that "sometimes the vocabulary becomes too strong to be digestible."

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Tirumalikaittevar, alias Ceyantan, who fixed an ever-burning lamp in the temple.[317] This civanani may possibly have been the same Tirumalikaittevar, as one of the miracles Tottikkalaiccuppiramaniyamunivar cites was said to have taken place at Tiruvilimilalai.[318]

A few works include Tirumalikaittevar in their kuruvanakkam (invocatory verses which honour the guru and his lineage). The second song in the kurumata varalaru (history of the teacher's matam) of Tirumular's Tirumantiram refers both to Tirumalikaittevar and his teacher Pokatevar,[319] and implies that Tirumular was a member of their lineage or matam. As Tirumular is traditionally assigned to the seventh century, Mu. Arunacalam and others view the verse as an interpolation, antedating Tirumalikaittevar. In the kuruvannakam of the Tiruvilaiyatarpuranam, the twelfth century Perumparrippulliyur Nampi refers to a Tirumalikaimatam at Citamparam, where his preceptors stayed.[320] The fourteenth century Marainanacampantar (a different Marainanacampantar than the preceptor of Umapati), praises the poet

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317 A.R.E. no. 414 of 1924. On the basis of this inscription, A. Gopinatha Rao, Centamil III, pp. 358-62, has suggested that Tirumalikaitevar and Centenar, another poet of the Tiruvicaippa are the same. See n. 328, below.

318 Onpatan Tirumurai, p. 55. The miracle said to be performed at Tiruvilimilalai will be described below.

319 Tirumantiram vs. 106. Also cited in Mu. Arunacalam, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru Tamilp Pulavar Varalaru Pattam Nurrantu, p. 455.

320 Perumparrappuliyarnammpi says that his spiritual guru was Vinayaka who was a disciple of Venkadar, the head of the Malikai-matam at Tillai (Tiruvilaiyatarpuranam, invocation, v.23), cited in Rajamanickam, p. 232.

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Tirumalikaittevar in invocations of two different works.[321] In these verses Marainanacampantar places himself in the tradition of Tirumalikaittevar, but whether as a poet or a lineage disciple is difficult to say. Finally, in both the Vetaraniyappuranam and the Tirukkanapperppuranam, the seventeenth century Akoratampiran, an initiate of Tiruvavatuturai, offered invocation to the preceptor of the malikai matam,[322] suggesting a strong connection between Tiruvavatuturai and the malikai matam, but whether the invocation refers to the site of the malikai matam or the lineage is unclear.

There is, as well, an inscription from Tiruvitaimarutur, a temple site not far from Tiruvavatuturai, dated to the time of Rajaraja III (about 1240 C.E.) which mentions that a widow received religious instruction from a Dattan-Utaiyar-Isanatevar of the lineage of the malikai-matattu-mutaliyar at Nallur.[323] Here again, it is unclear whether this matam actually housed lineage successors of the eleventh century Tirumalikaittevar, or whether its name merely refers to the type of building the matam was (malikai = palace or large house), or whether it refers to something else cannot be determined from the information in the inscription. Tirumalikaittevar apparently had some connection with

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321 Arunacalam, Tamil Ilakkiya, p. 458-9.

322 Rajamanikam, p. 232.

323 A.R.E., no. 49 of 1911. See also discussion in A.R.E 1909, p. 75.

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Tiruvitaimarutur. Mu. Arunacalam[324] recounts a tradition - the source of which I have not located - that Tirumalikaittevar came from one of the five aticaiva groups that had heritary rights at the temple there, thus making him a brahmin of sorts.

The tradition that connects Tirumalikaittevar with Tiruvitaimarutur is intriguing, as Tiruvitaimarutur was part of the temple circuit that was travelled by Tirumalikaittevar's contemporaries and indeed, by many others.[325] Centanar and Karuvurttevar, two of the other poets of the Tiruvicaippa, sang at Tiruvitaimarutur.[326] There is some controversy as to the identity of Centanar, who also sang at Tiruvavatuturai and Tiruvilimilalai.[327] A. Gopinatha Rao has suggested that Centanar and Tirumalikaittevar were the same person,[328] a view

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[324] Mu. Arunacalam, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru, Pattam Nurrantu, pp. 450-1. He perhaps bases his discussion on Nanantanta's earlier remarks in the introductory "Nulacaraycci" of the Turaicaippuranam (p. xx).

[325] Many of the nayanmar sang hymns at this temple. For details about the legends associated with this site, see Tanjore Gazr, vol. 1, p. 223.

[326] Centanar sang Tiruvitaimarutur mummanikkovai (Tiruvicaippa, pp. 48-54); Karuvur sang Tiruvitaimarutur Veyyacencoti (pp. 117-125).

[327] Tiruvicaippa, pp. 33-54.

[328] Centamil, III, pp. 358-62. This view, echoed by Mu. Irakavaiyankar in Cacanatattamilkkavi Caritam (Madras: 1961), pp. 35-36, suggests that Tirumalikaittevar and Centanar are the same on the basis of a temple inscription appearing at Tiruvilimilalai (A.R.E. 414 of 1924), mentioned above, which states, "there is a sivanani Tirumalikaittevar alias Ceyantan who fixed an ever-burning lamp in the temple." The argument maintains that the word, "ceyantan" (jayatan) is a Sanskrit rendering of Centanar. Also, Mu. Irakavaiyankar points out that the poet is not identified in the last song of Tirumalikaittevar, whereas the last song of Centanar concludes with the name of the poet. He thus argues that the two sets of songs are incorrectly attributed to two different poets, and concludes that Tirumalikaittevar and Centanar

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supported by Mu. Irakavaiyankar,[329] but rejected by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri.[330]

Karuvurttevar, who also sang at Tiruvitaimarutur, is identified as a close co-disciple of Tirumalikaittevar in the *Turaicaippuranam*.[331] Through the associations of a network of disciples of a particular lineage, Tiruvavatuturai and Tiruvitaimarutur may have then been linked together as they most certainly are now.

Tiruvitaimarutur's large Siva temple is now administered by the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, the camatis of two of Tiruvavatuturai's heads are located there, and Tiruvitaimarutur has long been an outpost of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam. Records from several sources indicate that the institution had maintained a representative (kattalaittampiran) there for at least two hundred years. If reliable, the traditional accounts of Tirumalikaittevar and Karuvurttevar suggest some very early patterns of site affiliation.

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are the same.

[329] See n. 331 above.

[330] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Colas, p. 678, refutes Gopinatha Rao's view by arguing that a generally reliable tradition would not make two authors out of one. The tendency he argued was instead to make one author out of two or more. Gopinatha Rao's evidence is slim, but Nilakanta Sastri's argument offers little more in terms of concrete evidence. Mu. Arunacalam, Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru. Tamilp Pulavar Varalaru. Pattam Nurrantu (Mayuram: 1972) p. 458, follows Nilakanta's position, arguing on the basis of a difference of style between the poems assigned to the two poets. All these arguments are rather loosely based on isolated references, and the question cannot be resolved here. As seen below, however, a miracle of making a temple car move without ropes that is supposed to have taken place at Tiruvilimilalai is connected to both Tirumalikaittevar and Centanar.

[331] See the account of Tirumalikaittevar, below.

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Other Sources

In addition to these few literary and epigraphical references to Tirumalikaittevar, there is another important source of information which gives some hint of a relationship between Tirumalikaittevar and the later Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam. The source is not the discursive language of invocatory verses, but the symbolic language of ritual; as such, the material is perhaps more difficult to interpret. Tiruvavatuturai's rituals do not provide any biographical information about Tirumalikaittevar; they provide "biographical" material of another sort: of the Adhinam itself. The way Tirumalikaittevar figures in the ritual undertakings of the institution makes a powerful statement. One has to be cautious about reading history into ritual performance; nonetheless, the ritual cycle does suggest a deeper connection to Tirumalikaittevar than that presented by the lineage (paramparai) literature. I will turn to this material after I review the puranic account of Tirumalikaittevar's life.

The Turaicaippuranam

Only the 58th and 59th chapters of the Turaicaippuranam offer some description of Tirumalikaittevar's life.[332] Its opening chapters recount the primordial events that shaped Tiruvavatuturai, such as

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[332] Turaicaippuranam, pp. 303-18.

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Paravati's transformation into a cow by Siva. Other material includes the establishment of a line of teachers when Siva gave upatecam, or teaching, to his disciple Nanti on Mount Kailasa, an event that the atinam's traditional histories cite as the source of its line of teachers. After its treatment of these legends and myths, the text turns its attention to historical or reputedly historical figures whose lives brought them into contact with Tiruvavatuturai. In addition to Tirumalikaittevar, the text includes stories of Tirumular, Appar, Tirunanacampantar, Cuntaramurti, Manikkavacakar and others[333] whose hagiographies appear in the Periyapuranam and other sources. These chapters provide fairly complete hagiographies of each of the saints, rather than recounting only what they did at Tiruvavatuturai. To be sure, Cattiram Caminatamunivar gives full attention to the visits the saints made to Tiruvavatuturai and especially highlights their stays at the matam there, which Tirumalikaittevar is credited with founding. As the chapters on Tirumalikaittevar are placed before the chapters on the other saints (with the exception of Tirumular), though the saints actually lived before him, the arrangement of material suggests that the earlier saints stayed in a matam on the site presently occupied by the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam.

Nonetheless, any reference to a matam at Tiruvavatuturai is set within a complete account of a nayanar's, or saint's, life and includes the retelling of events that took place elsewhere. Apart from a

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[333] In addition to the adventures of the famous nayanmar, the puranam also discusses Ceramanperuman, Cencatcola, and Varakunapantiyan.

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slightly increased emphasis on Tiruvavatuturai, the Turaicaippuranam does not substantially modify the standard or accepted accounts of the saints' lives. For example, the story of Tirunanacampantar that is recounted in the Turaicaippuranam is a condensed but otherwise reliable version of the story told by Cekkilar.

For Tirumalikaittevar, however, the treatment is much less extensive. Unlike the hagiographic accounts of other saints, the chapters on Tirumalikaittevar do not give a full account of his life; no information about his birth, family, or childhood is given. Only a few episodes, not all of which took place at Tiruvavatuturai, are recounted. The reason for this scant treatment may be simply that Cattiram Caminatamunivar did not know anything else about Tirumalikaittevar and, bound by the constraints of hagiographic writing of his time, was unwilling to elaborate or fabricate a fuller account. There may be, however, more complicated reasons which I will explore after I recount Tirumalikaittevar's story.

The gist of the account is quite simple: Tirumalikaittevar was staying at Tiruvavatuturai with Pokanatar (Skt. Bhoganatha), his religious preceptor, and some co-disciples. The rest of them eventually went on to other places, but Tirumalikaittevar was ordered by his guru to remain at Tiruvavatuturai. He eventually built a matam to the south of the temple, and had a number of adventures while there. On the whole, the material is episodic, and hints at religious and social tensions betweeen several groups. Some of this material relates to different Saivite traditions; other episodes imply connections between

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Tirumalikaittevar's lineage and the Cola kings.

In summary, here is Tirumalikaittevar's story:

The account opens at Tiruvavatuturai, where Pokanatar, a great cittar, is staying in the "king's forest" [aracavanam; ?land granted by the king], surrounded by disciples, some of whom follow the Saiva practice, some of whom follow the vama, or "left-handed" practice. Tirumalikaittevar and Karuvurttevar, another of Tiruvicaippa's poets, are both introduced as disciples of Pokanata. Karuvarur is described as drinking the intoxicating soma, worshipping Cakti (Skt. Sakti), and following the vamacamayam, the left-handed tradition, while Tirumalikaittevar is introduced as a worshipper of Siva, or a follower of the saiva tradition. Poka taught Tirumalikaittevar to perform puja to Nataraja (as Pokanata had some connections with Citamparam) and Karuvurttevar to do puja to Parasakti.

One day Tirumalikaittevar offers the remains of his puja (nirmaliyam) to Karuvurttevar who accepts them. But, later when Karuvur tries to reciprocate with the offerings of his puja, Tirumalikaittevar simply refuses. When Karuvur asks Poka to arbitrate, he is told that what Tirumalikaittevar had done is perfectly correct.

Poka explains that the auspiciousness and superiority of Tirumalikaittevar's puja to Siva entitled Karuvur to accept its remains, but that it was improper for Tirumalikaittevar to accept Karuvur's inferior offerings. With that explanation, Karuvur reveres Tirumalikaittevar as a superior guru.

The scene then shifts to an exchange between a Cola king and a sage named Erantamunivar. The king came to the sage, as there was a problem with the flow of the Kaveri river that was affecting the prosperity of the land. The river had begun to take a subterranean turn under the location of the Tiruvalanculi shrine, so creating a magical whirlpool that deprived the rest of the land of water.

The sage advises that either a king or a great sage must sacrifice himself to the magical whirlpool. Hearing this, the king resolves to give himself up to the river. His wife, however, is not very happy with this idea, so she accompanies her lord to where the sage is, and secures his blessings for the longevity of the two of them together. She then questions the efficacy of the sage's blessing in light of the king's intention to throw himself into the river. Caught by the wife's appeal, the sage forbids the king to jump and instead orders him to dedicate four sivalingas in place of his personal sacrifice.

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The sage then jumps into the river himself.

The Cola king has three linças erected, one in Tanjavur, one at the Irajarajeccuram [Rajarajesvara] temple, and one at Tirupuvanam [Tribhuvanam]. For the fourth, he has the jungle cleared and establishes a place called Kankaikontacoleccuram. He then runs into problems in the installation of the linga. The mortar does not set.

The king is in a state of agitation, but a devadasi who has been watching the rite, rushes over to Tiruvavatuturai and appeals to Pokanata for help. Pokanata summons Karuvur and orders him to go to Kankaikontacoleccuram. Then, as Pokanata is thinking of leaving Tiruvavatuturai himself and not wishing Tirumalikaittevar to suffer from the separation, he gives his sandals to Tirumalikaittevar so he can continue his daily gurupuja along with the daily worhsip of Macilamani and Oppilamulaiyan, Siva and his consort at Tiruvavatuturai. So Tirumalikaittevar becomes the preceptor at Tiruvavatuturai, while Pokanata goes on to Tiruppukalur.

Meanwhile, Karuvur arrives in Kankaikontacoleccuram to rectify the problem of the linga by chewing betel and spitting into the mortar.[334] He then sings a verse, " I, a servant, have eaten of the meat[335] prepared for you, oh Lord of Kankaikontacolapuram," in order to explain to the king what he did. Afterwards, he makes a circuit of several temples sites, Citamparam, Tiripuvanam, and Tiruvitaimarutur, where he sings more songs. Arriving on the banks of the Tamiraparani [in the deep south], he gathers disciples around him. There a crow delivers a letter from Pokanata, summoning him. Feeling the pangs of separation, Karuvurttevar sets off to have the joy of seeing Pokanata's face. En route he stopped at Tirunelveli and Tiruvilimilalai before arriving in Tiruppukalur, where Pokanata has established himself.

At the same time, Tirumalikaittevar has been faithfully following his daily devotional regime at Tiruvavatuturai. His discipline and dedication have brought nine crore of cittars (navakottaicittarkal) to his matam to the south of the temple and the Saiva teachings are flourishing and spreading to all

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[334] On the topic of uccista, see Charles Malamoud, "Observations sur la Reste dans le Brahmanisme", Wiener Zeitschrift fur die kunds Sudasiens, vol. xvi, 1972, pp. 5-26.

[335] The original printing of the text uses the word un, "meat", but someone who had handled the text before me changed the word to read una, "food", thus rendering the verse less reprehensible.

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places. One day, accompanied by Centanayanar,[336] another of Tiruvicaippa's poets, he goes to Citamparam, where he sang to Nataraja:

> May you repeat the words that I repeat
> May the words I utter be your words
> May you enjoy as I enjoy.[337]

There at Citamparam he composes the songs that are included in the Tiruvicaippa. He then returns to Tiruvavatuturai.

One day when Tirumalikaittevar is returning from the Kaveri River with water and flowers for his puja he encounters a procession carrying a corpse on the path to his matam. In order not to be polluted he appeals to Ganapati in a shrine by the wayside who silences the funerary drums and gives the corpse enough life so it can walk by itself to the cremation grounds. Thus at Tiruvavatuturai, Vinayakar [Ganapati] is known as Kottuttavirttakanapati, Ganapati who causes the drum beats to stop.

Then, barren Brahmin women [antana matarkal] of Tiruvavatuturai whose minds become so captivated by Tirumalikaittevar that they are unable to think of anything else, begin bearing sons resembling Tirumalikaittevar. Their husbands, horrified at the implications of this turn of events, request the king, Naracinka,[338] to punish him. When the king's men come with

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336 This reference suggests that Centanar and Tirumalikaittevar are two different persons; it is possible that Nanantatar, who compiled the 1961 prose version of the puranam, corrected the reference to ensure it conformed to the accepted listing of poets in the Tirumurai.

337 From what follows in the story, these verses have magical intent; from here on Tirumalikaittevar's speech becomes frightfully powerful.

338 The identity of this account's Naracinka is unclear, but a Naracinka does appear in other hagiographic accounts. In the Tiruttontattokai, Cuntiramurti calls himself the servant of the true servant of the lord, or king, Naracinkamunaiyaraiyan. Nampiyantar Nampi provides some more information about the king. According to Nampiyantar Nampi, the king, being of the habit of giving gold coins to Saiva tapsvins, once gave double the amount of gold to one who saw the feminine form everywhere. Cekkilar provides an even fuller account in his Periyapuranam:

> Naracinkamuniyaraiyan was the ruler of Tirumunaippatinatu. He always bore in his mind the greatness of the sacred ashes. On the Atirai day he would honour Saivites, feed them and give them

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ropes to bind him and bring him to the king, Tirumalikaittevar utters a phrase telling them to tie themselves up. They indeed become confused and get all tangled up in their own ropes. The same situation is repeated when the king again sends men, this time with weapons to cut up Tirumalikaittevar. Finally the king himself comes with all his armies, but Tirumalikaittevar appeals to the goddess (Oppilamulaiyammai), who summons the bulls (nantis) from the temple wall to defeat the army. It is annihilated, but the king and his minister are spared. This account thus explains the name of the the village next to Tiruvavatuturai, which is called Naracinkappettai.

This chapter ends with Tirumalikaittevar well established in his matam.

The next chapter opens with the arrival at Tiruvavatuturai of a Konkacittar,[339] a disciple of Pokanata. This Konkacittar is a great scholar, a follower of the left-handed practices, an adept in alchemy, one who drinks alcohol, possessed with great powers (citti), experienced in deep spiritual practices (Skt. sadhana), and so on. But as Tirumalikaittevar's power from Saiva practice is stronger, he draws the Konkacittar from the worship of Sakti to the worship of Siva. Tirumalikaittevar then administers the three levels of Saiva initiation to the cittar, who goes on to erect a Siva temple to the west of one of the tirtas at Tiruvavatuturai.

The puranam's discussion of Tirumalikaittevar ends here. The chapter which follows takes up the account of Manikkavacakar.

Tottikkalai Cuppiramaniyamunivar's Arputa Nikalccikal (Miracle

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one hundred gold coins each. One Atirai day, a pronounced libertine expressing lust in his every act, came besmeared with the sacred ashes. When others slighted him, Naracinkamunaiyaraiyan, recognizing the sacred ashes he wore, welcomed him with all humility and gave him twice the gold he usually gave to an ascetic.

As this king was associated with Cuntiramurti, he would have lived several centuries before Tirumalikaittevar. Oddly enough, some of the themes of the account, such as an uneasiness with saktas, are echoed in Tirumalikaittevar's story.

[339] According to the "Onpatan tirumurai aciriyarkal varalaru" in Onpatan Tirumurai, p. 59, Karuvur was born in Konkunatu. This last episode in the puranic account thus might be suggesting that Karuvur was converted to "pure Saiva" practices in the end.

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Deeds),[340] also provide some hagiographic detail, but only by way of adding to Tirumalikaittevar's list of miracles:

> Suspending the waterpot cast in mid-air
> Animating the corpse to deflect defilement
> Moving the gold-ornamented temple car with ropes untied[341]
> Summoning the clay Nantis from the wall
> Sweetening the smoke rising from the burning body in the cremation ground
> Drawing the water out of Konkanar's pot, causing the cooked grain to sprout,[342]

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[340] Aracanacanattu aranilaiyam, p. 223 and "Onpatan tirumurai aciriyarkal varalaru" in Onpatan Tirumurai, pp. 55-6.

[341] According to the discussion about Tirumalikaittevar in the introduction to Onpatan Tirumurai, p. 55, the miracle of the temple car took place at Tiruvilimilalai. This statement is repeated in several sources.

[342] Nananata, the author of the 1962 introduction to the Turaicaippuranam provides us with a full version of the miracle referred to here. The story Nanananta tells is remarkably similar to a story associated with Kurunanacampantar, the founder of the Dharmapuram Adhinam. There has been some rivalry between Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram in the recent past (which perhaps stems from earlier rivalry), but, based on the evidence available, it is hard to say whether this similarlity between the two stories reflects a disputed claim to a miracle story, or whether it is something else altogether. The episode takes place at Tiruvavatuturai and it centres on Poka's return from the temple one night.

> His torch bearer had fallen asleep, so Tirumalikaittevar took his place, unbeknownst to Poka. Before he set off for the matam Poka, as was his custom, gave hot prasadam to the servant holding the torch. When he arrived at the entrance to the matam, Poka, still unaware his own disciple, Tirumalikaittevar, held the torch, ordered him to halt. Poka then went inside. However, Tirumalikaittevar, obeying the order of his guru, stood at the entrance of the matam the whole night, holding the prasadam in one hand and the torch in the other. At sunrise, the time of his morning rites, he obtained two additional hands to perform his puja.
>
> The next night, the torch bearer arrived. By then, however, the prasadam had been transformed into raw pulse by the power of being in contact with Tirumalikaittevar's hand throughout the night. Tirumalikaittevar then sowed this pulse in a plot near the matam and it yielded a bountiful crop though there were

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To us you are grace, O Tirumalikaittevar,
Whose protector's feet I praise.

The Story

The puranic account seems to be telling us two contradictory things at once: that Tirumalikaittevar was associated with left-handed Saiva sects, but that Tirumalikaittevar himself did not follow their practices. Disciples of his own teacher were trained in vama discipline yet when their practices were compared to Tirumalikaittevar's, their discipline was considered impure and therefore inferior. Further, Tirumalikaittevar is portrayed in the account as helping bring about a break with the suspect traditions. In his lineage, he is the one who is not only trained in, but also the one who promulgates the purer form of Saiva worship. On these grounds, Karuvurttevar accepts Tirumalikaittevar as a superior guru. Of the disciples of Pokanata mentioned in the account only Tirumalikaittevar follows Saiva (as opposed to vama) practices which he spreads in exemplary fashion, both attracting disciples and converting saktas while maintaining a matam at Tiruvavatuturai.

The followers of the left-handed tradition are, however, inferior only in relation to Tirumalikaittevar. When the Cola king, who is presumably Rajendra Cola, wants to erect a great temple for himself,

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famines elsewhere throughout the land.

This account purportedly explains why the image of Tirumalikaittevar in the shrine at Tiruvavatuturai has four hands. The image at Tiruvavatuturai cannot be compared to any other images as there are no other temples or shrines to Tirumalikaittevar in Tamilnadu.

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he needs the help of Karuvurttevar, Tirumalikaittevar's left-handed co-disciple, who uses spit, ordinarily a pollutant, to fix the linga in place. The tantric's bodily fluid performs a miracle! Under the king's eye, the vamacarin comes to the rescue of the temple's consecration. Here, the account's message is unmistakable: in this great symbol of Cola state religion, no stigma whatsoever was attached to unorthodox traditions. Yet the account appears to attempt to distance Tirumalikaittevar from any taint of unorthodoxy. In light of the unequal sharing of piracatam (Skt. prasadam) between Tirumalikaittevar and Karuvurttevar, the whole account suggests both an association and a tension with what might be any of the unorthodox groups - Lakula, Pasupata, Kapalika, or Kalamukha - that were not only present in South India, but also recipients of Cola patronage.[343]

A kind of ambivalence surrounds Tirumalikaittevar's connections with the left-handed tradition as well. In the account's repeated emphasis on his good Saiva discipline, he is decidedly dissociated from anything but "pure" Saiva practices, but then Cattiram Caminatamunivar recounts an episode in which Tirumalikaittevar's morality is questioned - with some good reason - by the good folk of Tiruvavatuturai. As the puranam tells it, the whole affair is simply a misunderstanding. Nonetheless, the episode is based on an allegation of sexual misconduct, an accusation not uncommonly levelled at Pasupatas, Kalamukhas, and others. Tirumalikaittevar is implicated not because he is associated with Karuvurttevar or other cohorts, but because of his

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[343] David Lorenzen, Kapalikas and Kalamukhas, pp. 165-7.

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own reputation.[344]

In the puranam Tirumalikaittevar also is portrayed as having a somewhat awkward relationship with the local ruler in contrast to his teacher's relationship with the Cola king: Naracinka comes to Tiruvavatuturai only to destroy Tirumalikaittevar while the Cola king comes there to secure Pokanata's aid. The account in the Turaicaippuranam may be recalling some tension in the three-way relationship of the Cola king, Naracinka, the local ruler, and religious figures who enjoyed Cola patronage and who were settled in places like Tiruvavatuturai through the machinery of the Cola state. Likely outsiders, such figures may have been initially met with some suspicion in places like Tiruvavatuturai.

We know from inscriptions incised on the walls of the Gomuktisvara temple at Tiruvavatural that the site was a brahmadeya settlement by the time of Rajendracola. As such, the site was in a somewhat privileged position. Though not uncommon, areas granted to Brahmins or temples as either brahmadeya or devadana settlements were in a decided minority. Of 1,300 villages noted by Y. Subbarayalu in his study of the political geography of the Cola country, less than a

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344 The other puranic episode featuring a corpse and the notion of pollution, and the reference to sweetening the foul order of corpse burning in the cremation ground in Tottikkalai Cuppiramnaiyamunivar's verse are also suggestive of some of the more aberrant practices of fringe groups, but it is hard to guess what significance, if any, to attach to these references.

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quarter were brahmadeya or devadana settlements.[345] Subbarayalu also notes that the names of many of the recipients of grants suggest that they were originally outsiders to the region, many coming from areas in what is now Andhra Pradesh.[346] While no record is available that details when the area immediately around Tiruvavatuturai was granted as brahmadeya, indirect evidence suggests that some form of brahmadeya settlement or resettlement took place after the time of Rajaraja. In inscriptions prior to Rajaraja's rule, there is no mention of the area as a brahmadeya, and endowments to the temple are routed through other localities.[347] An inscription dated at the end of Rajaraja's reign identifies Sattanur, an earlier name for Tiruvavatuturai, as a brahmadeya,[348] while inscriptions dated to the beginning of Rajendra's

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[345] Y. Subbarayalu, Political Geography of the Cola Country (Madras: Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology, 1973), cited in Stein, Peasant Society, p. 123. Of the 1300 villages, about 250 were brahmadeyas, 50 devadana, 26 nagaras or trade settlements subject to the special influence of merchant assemblies, with a few identified as constituting kanimurruttu (?income right to those called katikaiyar, identified by Stein (p. 232) as poets or learned who were not Brahmins.

[346] Y. Subbarayalu, "The Cola State", Studies in History, vol. IV, no. 2 (1982), p. 279. Subbarayalu bases his study on the names compiled in Noboru Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu, and Toru Matsui, Concordance of the Names in the Cola Inscriptions (Madurai: 1978). SII, vol. II, 519. He notes that generally a Brahmin name consisted of one or more of the following units: village + gotra/family + father's name + title. As far as the village segment was concerned, Brahmin names showed a practice of using the names of their ancestral villages, the original villages from which the respective Brahmin families seem to have migrated. Many of these names are found to be the names of places in what is now present day Andhra Pradesh.

[347] A.R.E. nos. 105, 109, 111, 126, and others of 1925. Endowments to the temple at Tiruvavatuturai were mainly made through the assembly of Sirranaiccur, now known as Tiruvaiyaru.

[348] A.R.E. no. 101 of 1925, dated to the 24th year of Rajaraja.

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reign call the site Abayasrayacaturvedimangalam.[349]

One of the inscriptions from Tiruvavatuturai makes a reference to an endowment by Rajendracola to feed the residents of a matam named after the king's guru.[350] The record, dating to the 28th year of Rajendra, describes a transaction in which the temple obtained a tract of land from the assembly of Merkilimangalam, a brahmadeya, the income of which was to provide for the mahesvaras of the Sarvatevanttirumatam, called after the king's guru. An inscription[351] from the royal temple in Tanjavur identifies this preceptor. In this inscription from Tanjavur it is recorded that Rajendra, while at his palace at Gangaikondacolapuram in his 19th year of rule, ordered a large quantity of paddy to be delivered annually to the treasury in the city for enjoyment (bhoga = maintenance, sustenance) of the acaryas of the Rajarajesvara temple, of the [Sai]vacarya Sarvasivapandita, whom the inscription describes as "our Lord" (nam utaiyar), and of those deserving of his pupils and their pupils who were natives of Aryadesa, Madhydesa or Gaudadesa. The inscription concludes with the statement that the saivacaryas of the lineage should protect the endowment, suggesting that the lineage was given control over the resources provided in the grant.

Like everyone else at the newly built temple in Tanjavur, this Sarvatevan was brought in from elsewhere, but the situation at an

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[349] A.R.E. no. 102 of 1925, dated to the 6th year of Rajendra.

[350] A.R.E. no. 103 of 1925.

[351] SII, vol. 2, no. 20.

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artificially created sacred site would be quite different from the situation at a place such as Tiruvavatuturai that had a standing tradition of its own. The mahesvaras affiliated with the king's guru's matam may well have been settled at Tiruvavatuturai for purposes that further affected the already changing arrangements at the temple and its role in the larger society. Echoes of this tension appear in the hagiography.

In light of this material, it would appear that the mahesvaras provided for in the Tiruvavatuturai inscription were linked with a spiritual lineage established in a major centre and recipient of royal attention. In other words, their affiliations took them beyond Tiruvavatuturai, and involved them in some way with a larger network of influence. Whatever purpose this network served, linkage among major centres seems to have been brought about by endowments to groups like this one.

Whether Tirumalikaittevar was one of those mahesvaras can only be a matter of speculation. The puranam certainly places him in a matam at Tiruvavatuturai, and depicts a connection of some sort with the Cola king. Everything beyond that is speculation. What the story reveals from a distance of several centuries cannot be determined with any certainity. A puranam, especially a talapuranam, is a story first and foremost; one cannot squeeze historical accuracy out of a genre rooted in narrative tradition. Puranic material, however, was never totally at the whim of the author; remembered tradition contributed to its construction. As the talapuranam presents it, the tradition appears to

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have some recall of tensions in the interactions of residents of a matam at Tiruvavatuturai, local authority, and the Cola state.

The interactions are further compounded by saiva-vama tensions. From the sketchy story of Tirumalikaittevar, we cannot determine the precise nature of his relationship with the vaguely defined vama caivism of his co-disciples. Even so, unless elements symbolic of vama practices and notions of immorality are totally coincidental in this account, there seems to be some recall of an elusive connection to Tirumalikaittevar, who is both associated with and dissociated from a vama tradition. In its juxtaposition of ideas of purity/impurity and morality/immorality, the account might reflect some memory of some relationship between Tirumalikaittevar and unorthodox Saivite groups, while working carefully to distance him from those traditions.

Certainly the practices of groups like the Kapalikas or Kalamukhas had long been in some disrepute in some circles, as evinced by works like Mahendravarma's seventh century Mattavilaprahasana,[352] but the Agamas, which provide the basis of Tiruvavatuturai's Saiva Siddhanta, do not make any real attempt to distance their Saivism from that left of centre. As Helene Brunner[-Lachaux] points out,[353] orthodoxy is a somewhat ambiguous term from the point of view of the

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[352] This farce centres around the loss and eventual recovery of a Kapalika's skull-bowl. The play ridicules Pasupata and Buddhist ascetics as well as Kapalikas. See L.D. Barnett, transl., "Mattavilasa" in Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, vol. v. (1930), pp. 697-710, and Michael Lockwood and Vishnu Bhatt, King Mahendra's Mattavilasa (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1981).

[353] Helene Brunner[-Lachaux], 'Les Categories Sociales Vediques dans le Sivaisme du Sud" Journal Asiatique, 1964, pp. 451-472.

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Agamas. Any group, devoted to Siva, which accepted the authority of tantra (scripture = Agama) was considered orthodox, and Agamas like the Suprabheda[354] happily listed Pasupatas, Somas, Lakulas, along with the Saivas, who in turn were sub-divided into vama, daksina (right), misra (mixed), and siddhanta (definitive), as groups following traditions of revealed scripture. The loyalty of the Agamas certainly lay with the last group, the Saivasiddhantins, sometimes called Suddhasaivas (pure Saivas), or sometimes just simply Saivas, but the texts did not shy from association with the other groups in their listings.

Apparently some of the Cola kings felt the same way. There is inscriptional evidence to suggest that Rajendra Cola maintained somewhat of a close relationship with what appears to have been a Kalamukha lineage at Tiruvorriyur.[355] As well, the image of Siva that Rajendra Cola had installed in his Kankaikontacolapuram temple was in the form of Lakulisa.[356] This evidence is corroborated by the puranic account, which plainly tells us that Karuvurttevar, who completed the consecration of the king's temple at Kankaicontacolapuram, was a vamacarin. But the directions of royal patronage do change, as do understandings of orthodoxy. When Cattiram Caminatamunivar was compiling the Turaicaippuranam in the eighteenth century,

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[354] Ibid., p. 453.

[355] A.R.E. nos. 104 and 126 of 1912; see discussion in Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society, pp. 342-3.

[356] Burton Stein, ibid., p. 342, and C. Sivaramamurti, Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations in South India and the Deccan (Calcutta: Indian Museum, 1955), pp. 23-4 and 27.

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well-established feelings about orthodoxy and unorthodoxy might likely have cast aspersions on a matam which housed an image of cittar who had some sort of connection with vama practices.[357]

Indeed, the puranam tells us that the location of Tirumalikaittevar's camati notwithstanding, the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam has no inclination to trace its roots back to either Tirumalikaittevar or his lineage. Like Tirumular discussed above, Tirumalikaittevar is completely absent from the listings of the Adhinam's preceptors which go back beyond the sixteenth century to include earlier figures like Umapati. Apart from the account that Namaccivaya, Tiruvavatuturai's founder, was instructed by his guru to establish a matam at the site of Tirumalikaittevar's camati,[358] the lineage (paramparai) literature is quite silent about Tirumalikaittevar. Even though Tirumalikaittevar's songs make up part of the Tirumurai, he does not exist as far as Tiruvavatuturai's lineage is concerned. However, Tottikkalaiccuppiramaniyamunivar's Tirumalikaittevar Tiruviruttankal[359] and Tiruvavatuturai's rituals present a somewhat different picture.

Tottikkalai Cuppiramaniyamunivar was a contemporary of Kacciyappamunivar, who is credited with the construction of the wall and

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[357] Other bits of evidence occasionally reflect an interest in material that had some association with unorthodox groups. For example, an undated inscription from the Puttukottai region (774 of Pudokkottai State) records the building of a shrine to Bhairava by one Vaitiyalinkattampiran, whose name indicates membership in one of the velala lineages.

[358] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 220.

[359] Reproduced in ibid., pp. 221-223.

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walkways that set the two camatis of Namaccivaya and Tirumalikaittevar[360] off from surrounding areas in the matam. This construction combines the two shrines within one enclosure, thus further accentuating their closeness to each other; any circumambulation done to the shrine of Namaccivaya necessarily takes in the shrine of Tirumalikaittevar.

The tone of the Tirumalikaittevar Tiruviruttankal suggests that the verses were recited before the shrine of Tirumalikaittevar. The verses are plaintive; the supplication is not for spiritual liberation, but rather for material protection. The fourth set of verses in this work is particularly striking:

> We, who have renounced women, society, those who lay claim to us, wealth and even birth,
> We have in our loneliness your sacred feet as our only refuge.
> If there be any wants, tell us, to whom else can we go?
> We ask if at all there be anyone else.
> You sustain the devotees' life, o Tirumalikaittevar, whom the heavenly hordes honour.[361]

In its eulogizing of Tirumalikaittevar, this set of tiruviruttankal resembles much of the poetry produced by members of the Adhinam in the eighteenth century. However, within the Adhinam, such verse was ordinarily kept within the lineage, being addressed to the

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[360] Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, p. 129. This information was called to my attention by several people when I was at Tiruvavatuturai.

[361] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 222.

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head of the lineage,[362] or to the founder of the lineage.[363] As well, these verses go beyond praise; they depict a personal relationship between Tirumalikaittevar and the tampiran, who address him as a sort of patron saint in times of need.[364]

Tottikkalaiccuppiramaniyamunivar's other verses addressed to Tirumalikaittevar are in the same vein:

> You, oh pure one, worshipping daily at the feet of
> The mystic Pokanata, equalled by none,
> By speech and by mind, you bring honour
> To the delight of the fragrant lord.
> You are the brightness dispelling darkness,
> The embodiment of devotion stemming from all directions
> You, who shed grace on Tiruvavatuturai!
> O Tirumalikaittevar, in our hearts let us take refuge.
>
> The miraculous nature that is beyond the scrutiny
> Of those outside the faith, you have explained
> In fullness, attaining Siva's bliss.
> Our great one, wither up our faults
> Servant of truth,
> Give us our life that
> Turaicai may flourish,

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[362] Many of the heads of the lineage composed verses praising their teachers. Other initiated members did likewise. For example, the 16th head of the lineage was known as a great scholar and several of his disciples produced works extolling both his erudition and piety. Such works include Venuvanalinkacuvamikal, Cuppiramaniyatecikavilaccicirappu, edited by Arumukaccuvamikal (Tirunelveli: 1891) and Minaksicuntaram Pillai, Cuppiramaniyam Tecikarmalai, edited by U. Pusparata Cettiyar, (Cennai: 1887).

[363] Important examples are Ampalavana Tecikar's Namaccivaya Malai (Pantaracattiram Namaccivaya Malai, Tiruvavatuturai: 1967) and Pin Velappa Tecikar's Pancakkaratecikar Malai (Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, p. 123).

[364] According to Mu. Arunacalam, Tamilp Ilakkiya. Pattam Nurrantu, p. 451, whenever a tampiran had a grievance against another, he would utter the complaint in the sancity of Tirumalikaittevar's shrine to get recourse. This practice may have fallen into disuse, as I neither observed it nor heard about it during my stays at Tiruvavatuturai.

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Let us praise the lotus feet of Tirumalikaittevar.[365]

Ritual and Tirumalikaittevar

The rituals performed daily in the matam are by no means silent about Tirumalikaittevar; rather they fully acknowledge his presence. At Tiruvavatuturai, as at the other matas, daily rites of puja are an inseparable part of the institution. In fact, it has been argued that provision for worship in accordance with an established tradition is itself the defining characteristic of a religious centre housed in a matam. For the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, the main rites centre around the lineage deities kept in the puja cell (periyapujamatam) and the two camatis in the matam. As noted in the introduction, Tiruvavatuturai's lineage deities consist of a Nataraj, a linga once worshipped by the fourteenth century Umapati, who is considered to be the fourth in the earthly line of Saiva Siddhanta preceptors, and the vaityanata linga of the present lineage's founder, Namaccivaya, whose spiritual lineage is traced back to Umapati.[366] Several other images relating to Nataraj are also kept in this cell,[367] as well as a tiny silver image of Namaccivaya and the linga the present kurumakacannitanam received from his predecessor.

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[365] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 222.

[366] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, p. 224.

[367] The present kurumakacannitanam of Tiruvavatuturai listed the consort of Nataraj and an image of Cuppiramaniyam among these images.

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All of these deities, as well as Tirumalikaittevar and Namaccivaya, are honoured with separate rites of puja performed according to the Agamic specifications followed by Tiruvavatuturai.[368] Done twice a day - in the morning with full sixteen-step puja to each major image and in the evening in abbreviated fashion -- this cycle of puja provides the Adhinam's ritual tradition with its basic structure. Discussion in the next chapters will refer back to this ritual pattern; what is significant for our purposes here is the way in which the puja to Tirumalikaittevar fits in with the rest of the performance.

Puja to Tirumalikaittevar is conducted by the head sivacarya (temple priest) of the Siva temple adjacent to the matam, while kurumakacannitanam, the head of the Adhinam, performs the rites to the lineage deities, and a tampiran of the institution conducts the rite at the camati of Namaccivaya. When kurumakacannitanam has completed his round of worship to the lineage deities, he moves from the puja cell to the shrine of Tirumalikaittevar, where he attends the puja performed by the temple priest. Only when that puja is completed and when he has received its blessings (piracatam, Skt. prasadam) in the form of viputi, or sacred ash from the temple priest, does he proceed to the camati of his lineage's founder. On the centre's auspicious days, such as the ten-day festival of gurupuja,[369] kurumakacannitanam himself conducts the puja at the shrine of Namaccivayamurti; ordinarily a qualified tampiran

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[368] Aracavanattu Aranilaiyam, pp. 224f gives a brief discussion of these rites.

[369] Gurupuja will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

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commences the rite which is finished by kurumakacannitanam's distribution of sacred ash.

It is unthinkable that anyone except a properly initiated member of the institution's ascetic order be allowed near the camati of Namaccivaya;[370] likewise, only a civacarya may perform the puja to Tirumalikaittevar. Concerns about ritual purity account in part for this division of ritual labour: either camati would be polluted were a non-qualified person to approach it. Namaccivaya was velala and members of the Adhinam - his spiritual kinsmen through their membership in his lineage - are likewise velala. "Kin" links with Namaccivaya and qualifications earned through rites of initiation enable a tampiran to undertake puja to Namaccivaya. With respect to Tirumalikaittevar, members of the Adhinam often explain that he was a Brahmin saint to account for the temple priest's role in the Adhinam's daily rituals. They also state that the Adhinam employs the temple priest in order to ensure that the worship to Tirumalikaittevar is done properly. As Tirumalikaittevar has no place in the Adhinam's lineage, it follows that a tampiran would not undertake the puja. Why a sivacarya[371] would do it in the middle of the Adhinam's ritual performance is altogether another question that cannot be easily answered.

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[370] It would also be unthinkable for the head of Tiruvavatuturai to worship at another institution's founder's camati. When invited to a ceremony at Dharmapuram, for example, Tiruvavatuturai's kurumakacannitanam will send an envoy in his place. Only if their institutions are linked in some formal sense will the head of one worship at the shrine of another.

[371] The undertaking of the puja constrasts with that done at Tirumular's camati, where an otuvar conducts the rite.

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The division of ritual duties thus emphasizes Tirumalikaittevar's separation from the Adhinam's lineage. Nonetheless, the timing and circumstances of Tirumalikaittevar's puja accord him quite some prominence. At present, the daily worship of Namaccivaya is not completed in that viputi is not distributed, until after the sivacarya has finished the worship of Tirumalikaittevar. In other words, the blessings (or grace) that come from Namaccivaya cannot be dispersed until kurumakacannitanam has received the blessings/grace of Tirumalikaittevar. The order of the pujas also gives some priority to Tirumalikaittevar as respect or devotion to him must always precede that shown to Namaccivaya. Tirumalikaittevar predates Namaccivaya, but then so does Tirumular, whose daily puja (conducted by an otuvar) has no effect whatsoever on the Adhinam's daily ritual cycle. The requirement that Tirumalikaittevar be worshipped before Namaccivaya holds even during gurupuja, the most important event in the institution's annual ritual calendar, when all the members and associates of the Adhinam gather at Tiruvavatuturai to celebrate Namaccivaya's "attainment of the fullness of Siva".[372]

In fact, Tirumalikaittevar inaugurates the ten-day celebration.[373] On the eve of the flag-raising which announces the celebration, the head of the Adhinam accompanies the processional image

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[372] Gurupuja is celebrated on what an outsider to the lineage would call the death anniversary of Namaccivaya. Chapter Eight will discuss this celebration.

[373] Glenn Yocum, "Wisdom Made Visible: The Divine Teacher in Tamil Saiva Temple and Monastic Ritual", paper presented at the 1986 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, p. 9.

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(utsavamurti) of Tirumalikaittevar from the adjoining Siva temple, where this image is ordinarily housed, to Tirumalikaittevar's shrine in the matam. While the head of the Adhinam and Tirumalikaittevar (in the form of the utsavamurti) look on, the civacarya performs puja to Tirumalikaittevar, whose blessings are distributed to the Adhinam head and other devotees. According to the people at the matam, the journey of processional image signifies Tirumalikaittevar's renewal of his presence in the matam and his permission that Tiruvavatuturai may commence its gurupuja celebration.[374]

There is some indication of long-standing practice of this ritual pattern which gives Tirumalikaittevar a role similar to that of an ancestral deity who protects the institution. I turn to an event recounted in Au. Ve. Caminatan's biography of Minatcicuntirampillai, the nineteenth century Tamil scholar who was intimately connected with the Tiruvavatuturai Atinam.[375] According to Caminatan's account, Minatcicuntirampillai had come with his retinue to Tiruvavatuturai to spend some time with Sri-la-Sri Cuppiramaniyateckir, the then head of the institution. In mid-day, Minatcicuntirampillai was sitting on the porch of the matam when he heard the gongs announcing the mid-day meal of the institution.

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[374] Ibid.

[375] Au. Ve. Caminatan, Minatcicuntirampillai Avarkal Carittiraccurukkam (Tiruvanmiyur, Cennai: Dr. Au. Ve. Caminataiyar Nul Nilayam, 1965), p. 145.

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This meal is called mahesvarapuja,[376] or the worship of the devotees (mahesvaras). In this rite, the head of the institution is seated in a large eating hall with his followers arranged in front of him in rows according to their rank within the institution. Before the meal begins, the head tampiran, or Kurumakacannitanam's chief disciple, performs aratanai (an abbreviated form of puja that consists of the waving of lamps), both to the head of the institution and to his devotees. This rite, which follows the worship of Namaccivaya, is an integral part of Tiruvavatuturai's ritual cycle: after the lineage deities and the founder of the lineage are honoured, the lineage, complete with its lay following is celebrated and the ties within the community are reiterated in a communal meal.

When Minatcicuntirampillai heard the gong announcing mahesvarapuja, he inquired whether the puja to Tirumalikaittevar had been completed. When he was told that it had not, he then composed a verse chastising Cuppiramaniyamtecikar by reminding him that the sitting in rows (mahesvarapuja) was to take place only after the puja to Tirumalikaittevar had been completed:

> I, a mere foot-servant of Cuppiramaniyatecikar
> Whose dazzling presence can but be praised,
> Supplicate.
> There can be no sitting in rows [mahesvarapuja]
> Until the great puja to Tirumalikaittevar is

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[376] In other words, this meal is similar to the daily feeding of mahesvaras provided for in an endowment recorded in A.R.E. no. 103 of 1925. Part Three of this thesis will discuss provisions to feed ascetics/brahmins/mendicants, which are frequently recorded in inscriptions.

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Completed with love.[377]

Obviously Minatcicuntirampillai felt it appropriate to point out the error of the omission. In other words, the scholar reminded the head of the Adhinam that Tirumalikaittevar was part of its tradition and that ritual propriety included the honouring of Tirumalikaittevar.

The Relationship Between the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam and Tirumalikaittevar

Taken together, these three examples - Tirumalikaittevar's worship in Tiruvavatuturai's daily cycle of puja, his role in the inauguration of its most important annual celebration, and Minatcicuntirampillai's reminder that Tirumalikaittevar had to be honoured with the proper devotion before mahesvarapuja commenced - present a powerful image of Tirumalikaittevar. As Carol Breckenridge has pointed out in another context,[378] ritual events provide situations in which honours are distributed and received by the various participants in the ritual drama. When the head of the Adhinam worships

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[377] Minatcicuntirampillai's poem has double entendre. The line, "There can be no sitting in rows" (panti yatal valak kam) also can be understood as "There is no binding of birth." Understood in this way, the intended criticism is softened, as this reading calls Cuppiranmaniyamtecikar's attention to the liberating aspect of puja to Tirumalikaittevar. From Au. Ve. Caminatan's account of the circumstances that led Minatcicuntirampillai to compose this poem, there is no mistake about the allusion to mahesvarapuja.

[378] Carol Breckenridge, "The Sri Minaksi Sundaresvarar Temple", p. 285.

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at the shrine of Tirumalikaittevar, he is no casual devotee who happens to stray into a temple. Symbolic himself of his institution, kurumakacannitanam is involved in a reciprocal transaction in which the Adhinam honours and is honoured by Tirumalikaittevar. The significance of the transaction? Simply put, Tirumalikaittevar has a place, and an important one at that, in Tiruvavatuturai's tradition. By continually remembering not only to honour Tirumalikaittevar, but also to honour him before honouring Namaccivaya and Tiruvavatuturai's lineage, the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam seems to be acknowledging some sort of spiritual debt to Tirumalikaittevar. But, the exact nature of that debt is opaque, perhaps intentionally so.

The clues are frustrating. The very location of Tirumalikaittevar's camati is intriguing; why would Namaccivaya's camati be placed so close to that of Tirumalikaittevar? Sheer coincidence or something else? And what of the muffled connection Tiruvavatuturai acknowledges with a cittar? Tiruvavatuturai's paramparai literature claims that two preceptors came between Umapati and Namaccivaya. Of them, one is identified as a cittar, a "mystic". According to the literature, this Cittarcivappiracatecikar initiated Namaccivaya and sent him to Tiruvavatuturai,[379] though the gap of some two hundred and fifty years between Umapati and Namaccivaya hardly accommodates only two teachers.

Further, the lineage at Tiruvavatuturai is not the only one to have an elusive association with a loosely defined cittar

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[379] Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, p. 53.

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tradition. Dharmapuram does as well. Kurunanacampantar, the founder of the line at Dharmapuram, is apparently thought of as somewhat of a cittar himself, as his Cokkanatavenpa, Civanantapotam, Civapokacaram and Nanacaranul are included in the three major collections of cittar works.[380] Yet, even with the strong presence of very early cittars at Tiruvavatuturai and these elusive connections with a cittar tradition, the Saiva Siddhanta tradition of the velala centres steadfastly sticks with Meykantar when tracing the line of preceptors backwards. As I have emphasized above, all preceptors before Meykantar were celestial beings according to Saiva Siddhanta reckonings, even though two works considered part of the fourteen canonical sastram works were composed by humans who lived before Meykantar. Speculation about Meykantar's velala identity notwithstanding, why the members of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, who have contributed to the making of the Saiva Siddhanta tradition, have chosen not to look beyond Meykantar is still a question.

Nonetheless, evidence is simply insufficient to establish a direct lineage relationship between Tirumalikaittevar (or lineage affiliates) and the Tiruvavatuturai's later line of preceptors. In fact, there are indications of breaks in continuity resulting from political disruptions and changing settlement patterns that affected all

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[380] Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, p. 239. The three major anthologies are Periyananakkovai edited by Va. Caravanamuttup Pillai (Madras: 1967), Cittar periya nanakkovai ena valankum cittar patalkal, edited by Aru. Ramanatan (Madras: 1959), and Patinencittarnanakkovai published by Me. Vi. Venukopalap Pillai (1947, reprint 1956). See also K.V. Zvelebil, The Poets of the Powers (London: Rider and Co., 1973). The major cittar anthologies also contain Karuvurpujaviti, a work attributed to the same Karuvurttevar discussed above.

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of the Tamil countryside, which make arguments for a single and unbroken line of development spurious.[381] The most we can note is that we have evidence to suggest that part of Tiruvavatuturai's ancestry is related to a loosely defined cittar tradition.

One final comment. The same tradition that tells us Namaccivaya was initiated by a cittar also speaks of some correction of practices at Tiruvavatuturai through the instruction of Civakkirayokikal, the scholar and ascetic well known for his commentaries and paddhati texts, who was residing at the matam in

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[381] I will cite one example of how such disruptions affected a lineage's line of development. The example comes the Kuruparamparai Vilakkam and relates to a disciple of Namaccivaya. It was also recounted to me by the present kurumakacannitanam of Tiruvavatuturai in 1985. At the time when Namaccivaya was established at Tiruvavatuturai, there was some disruption in the worship at Citamparam. Under the supervision of the Vaisnava Vijayanagara officialdom, only puja to Govindaraja was taking place; puja to Nataraja was neglected. One day a group of diksitars came to Tiruvavatuturai to ask Namaccivaya for help. He responded by ordering one of his disciples, Civappirakacacuvami, to go to Citamparam. The disciple went, and then went on to Vellur where met with Lingama Nayaka, who headed the Tamil uprising against Vijayanagara power in 1599-1601. The disciple, known as Turaiyur Civappirakacacacuvami, met with the Nayaka and converted to Virasaivism to restore the worship of Nataraj at Citamparam, which the Nayak reportedly did. Turaiyur Civappirakacacuvami went on to begin a line of Virasaivite preceptors at Tiruvannamalai. Tiruvavatuturai and Citamparam are connected because of this incident, and today during the gurupuja celebration diksitars from Citamparam come to Tiruvavatuturai to exchange honours with kurumakacannitanam. As well, a representative from the Virasaiva lineage descended from Turaiyur Civappirakacacuvami is said to come to take darsana of kurumakacannitanam. The rather close relationship between the Saiva Siddhanta lines and the Virasaivite lines continued after Turaiyur Civappirakacacuvami. The seventeenth century Virasaivite Civappirakacar, said to have composed a polemical treatise against Christianity, the Ecumatanirakaranam, which is no longer extant, was educated under Velliyampalattampiran of Dharmapuram. See Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, pp. 230-31.

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Suriyinarkoil near-by.[382] Here again, the details are vague:

> After Namaccivaya had established himself in the cittarmatam at Tiruvavatuturai, Civakkirayokikal decided to come to call upon him. As he approached Tiruvavatuturai, he encountered a disciple of Namaccivaya out begging alms. When this disciple saw Civakkirayokikal, he rushed over to his presence and fell prostrate. Civakkirayokikal was not happy about this show of obeisance. He reflected that even though this individual was a disciple of Namaccivaya, the disciple knew little of the acarya tradition, so Civakkirayokikal registered a complaint with Namaccivaya. When he learned that Namaccivaya had admonished the disciple, he recognized what a great soul Namaccivaya was, and from henceforth revelled in his company.

This story suggests that the development of the institution located at Tiruvavatuturai was in part influenced by a member of another lineage already established at Suriyanarkoil. The connection between Namaccivaya and Civakkirayokikal indicates one other important source that contributed to the emergence of the institutions at Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram. In his Civaneriprakacam, Civakkirayokikal provides some statements about his lineage and its source. This material and the material provided in the commentary of the text by one of Civakkirayokikal's followers strongly suggest that some of the roots of the institutions that developed into the Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram Adhinams can be traced to North India. The next section explores these roots, by first examining epigraphical evidence to determine if such movement into South India is documented, and then by looking at three

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[382] Ibid., pp. 55-6. The story is also recounted in a publication of the traditional history of the Suriyanarkoil Adhinam (Tirukuttam, Suriyanarkoil, n.d., pp. 14-15).

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textual accounts of lineages.

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CHAPTER FIVE

INSTITUTIONAL ORIGINS

B.G.L. Swamy has demonstrated[383] that several groups of preceptors sharing institutional affiliations were settled at numerous sites in South India over a period of several centuries. Along with V.S. Pathak,[384] J. van Troy,[385] V.V. Mirashi,[386] and others,[387] he has argued for Northern Indian origins of these lineages, suggesting that the later Saiva lineages were derivatives of them. In this chapter I will examine the material presented by Swamy and others, to see what evidence we have of external influence on the development of the velala

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[383] B.G.L. Swamy, "The Golaki School of Saivism in Tamil Country", in Indian Historical Quarterly, vol. LIII, no. 1, April 1975, pp. 167-211.

[384] V.S. Pathak, Saiva Cults in Northern India (Varanasi: Dr. Ram Naresh Varma, 1960).

[385] J. Van Troy, "The Social Structure of the Saiva Siddhantika Ascetics (700-1300 A.D.)" in Indica, vol. II, no. 2, September 1974, pp. 77-86.

[386] V.V. Mirashi, "The Saiva Acaryas of the Mattamayura Clan" in Indian Historical Quarterly, vol. XXVI, no. 1, March 1950, pp. 1-16.

[387] Rohan A. Dunuwila, Saiva Siddhanta Theology (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), pp. 121-7.

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lineages. In order to avoid a tedious over-complication of the discussion by providing countless details of the several lineages that appeared in different places in the Tamil area from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries, I will focus on one related group of preceptors, identified as members of the bhiksamatam-santana, the lineage of the bhiksa matam. I will begin the discussion with a listing of some of the references to individuals associated with this line to give some idea of its geographical and temporal dispersion. I will not, however, cite all the epigraphical references to individuals affiliated with the bhiksa matam, as such listing might well become tedious or, worse, meaningless. After I have examined these references, I will then turn to the source of the bhiksa matam, and then to its relationship with other lineages, both northern and southern.

Two thirteenth century inscriptions from the Ramnad district make reference to the bhiksa matam. One[388] registers the remission of taxes on land purchased by Sarvesvara, a disciple of the bhiksa-matam acarya, for the upkeep of a Sivaprakacar matam situated near the temple. A slightly later inscription from the same place[389] refers to the sale of land by an individual originally from Tiruvitaimarutur, in the Tanjavur district, for the upkeep of a matam presided over by a Rajendrattu-Mutalaiyar Sivaprakacar, a disciple of the bhiksamatattu-mutalaiyar. It appears that these two inscriptions are referring to the same matam. In the sixteenth century, two records show

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[388] A.R.E. no. 173 of 1935-6.

[389] A.R.E. no.164 of 1935-36, dated 1284 CE.

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that disciples of the same bhiksa lineage had administrative responsibilities in two temples in the same area.[390]

A fourteenth century inscription[391] from Manappadaivitu in the Tirunelveli district records the gift of certain privileges in the temple to a disciple of Agamasilatevar, alias Umaiyorupagar of the lineage of the bhiksa matam which had rendered services to the temple.

In the Putukkottai region we find two inscriptions separated by almost two centuries that refer to members of the lineage of the bhiksamatam. One, a Pantyan inscription,[392] dates 1285 CE, and registers the purchase of a matam called the Vira-Pantyan tirumatam in public auction from the authorities of the temple by Ataivar Vinaitirthar, a tapsvin identified as a disciple of the mutaliyar of the bhiksamatam, a place of sacred recitation (laksadyayastanam). The later inscription,[393] dated 1452 CE, comes from the same area in the Putukkottai region[394] and records a grant of land to one Tiruppunavasal-Mutaliyar Paramacivar of the bhiksamatasantanam for the maintenance of his matam.

The term bhiksa, which identifies the institutional affiliation of the individuals cited in these inscriptions, is apparently derived from the way in which a gift of land to an early preceptor was labelled.

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390 A.R.E. no. 352 of 1912 and no. 493 of 1909.

391 A.R.E. no. 43 of 1909.

392 Pudukotai, no 397.

393 Pudukkotai, no 707.

394 Tirumayyam taluk.

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The gift, made in the tenth century, is described in a later inscription known as the Malkapuram inscription. This inscription,[395] dating 1261 CE, describes the lineage of a preceptor named Visvesvara-sambhu, who hailed from Gauda-desa before he settled in Andhra. Visvesvara-sambhu initiated the Kakatiya king, Ganapati I, into the Saiva faith and was in turn generously patronized.

The Malkapuram inscription traces the spiritual genealogy of Visvesvara-sambhu to a tenth century preceptor Sadbhavasambhu, who was located in Chedi country further north. The inscription states that the Kalachuri king, Yuvarajadeva I (915-945 CE) presented as bhiksa (religious charity) three lakhs of villages (the revenue from one third of his kingdom - perhaps hyperbolic emphasis of the king's munificence) in the Dahala mantala (an area situated between the Bhagirati and Narmada rives) to a Sivacarya by the name of Sadbhava-sambhu belonging to a line of teachers commencing from Durvasa. This teacher built a matam called the golaki matam. That name comes from the place where the matam was built. A hypethral temple housing the sixty-four yoginis was situated on a hillock near the bank of the Narmada River. That temple was known as the golaki or round temple because of its shape.[396] The matam built near, or adjacent to it as a result of Yuvarajadeva's charity (bhiksa) was thus known as either the bhiksa or golaki matam.

The terms appear to have been used interchangeably. A late

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[395] SII, vol. X, no. 395, cited in Journal of Andhra Historical Society, vol. IV, p. 157, Swamy, p. 168, Pathak, pp.35-36, Mirashi, pp. 11-15.

[396] Mirashi, p. 10.

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Tamil inscription (approximately 1504)[397] from the Ramnad district spells out this use. It records a gift of revenue to Isana-siva of the bhiksamata-santana alias lakshadhyayi-santana and the golaki dharma, who was in charge of the kallu-matam (stone matam). Used in this way, terms bhiksamata-santana, laksadhyayi-santana or golaki matam that appear in the inscriptions are ways of presenting the pedigree of the individual concerned; the terms identify membership in a defined religious guild or brotherhood.

The earliest record[398] of the lineage in Tamil country uses the phrase laksadhyayi-santana as a means of identification. This record was incised during the reign of Rajendra and says that a preceptor by the name of Kanakasabhapati...tecikar[399] was residing at Kilaikattu (modern Kilaiyur, Nagapattinam) which was a seat of the acaryas of the laksadhyayi-santana [who lived in] the Patanjalitevar matam at Citamparam. There are other similar references to members of the laksadhayayi-santana of the golaki matam or vamsa found at Tiruvannammalai,[400] Tirukodunkundram[401] and elsewhere.

As members of this lineage moved into the more southern regions and into areas such as Ramnad, Tirunelveli, Puttukkottai that had been on the periphery of the Cola domain, the term bhiksamata-santana became

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397 A.R.E. no. 178 of 1935-6.

398 A.R.E. no. 88 of 1946-7.

399 Part of the name is missing or damaged.

400 A.R.E. no. 11 of 1935-6.

401 A.R.E. no. 209 of 1924.

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the conventional way of identifying the group. An inscription from the time of the Pandyan king Maravarma Sundara-Pantyan I (1216-1253)[402] describes this movement by a member of the golaki/bhiksa brotherhood in the Pandyan region. This inscription records the provision made to feed the ascetic Isanadeva and his disciples who had emigrated from the Krishna-golaki matam at Tiruvarur in the Tanjavur district and were residing in a Nallaperumal matam at a site near Madurai. As we have seen above, later references from that area use the term bhiksamata-santana. Why this signifier was preferred in the later and more geographically distant inscriptions is unclear, except that the connection with the golaki temple much further north in central India may well have faded over time and distance. Interestingly enough, the signifier bhiksa (charity) also gives an accurate portrayal of one of the functions of the lineage members, namely to play an instrumental role in the process of dana (gifting) that so characterized the medieval Hindu temple tradition.

From the evidence we have of them in Andhra, the golaki preceptors took an active role in this process in community and temple affairs. The Malkpuram inscription, cited above, records the activities of Visvesvarasambhu, the spiritual descendant of Sadbhavasambhu who built the original golaki matam. Visesvarasambhu built a temple, matam, school, choultry for the distribution of food, a maternity home and a hospital. He settled sixty families of Dravida brahmins and granted them land for their maintenance. Of the remaining land revenue

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[402] A.R.E. no. 504 of 1909.

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Visvesvarasambhu received, one third went to maintenance of the temple, one third to maintenance of the matam, and one third to the feeding house and the other charitable activities. Any ascetic, and anyone irrespective of caste, who came to the village was to be supplied with food. Visvesvarasambhu also stipulated that the golaki line would be appointing an acarya who would be in charge of the charitable activities, the temple, the feeding house and the matam. The acarya appointed would possess the qualifications of being a virtuous and learned brahmana, and well conversant with Saivism and its mysteries.

While I do not wish to minimize the references to erudition and scholarship the inscription makes, I want to draw close attention to the importance placed on the administration of charitable activities. As I will demonstrate in Part Three, a matam was a premier site of such activity, and the ascetics who lived in the matas were powerful images of what religious charity, or dana, represented.

Lineage Trajectories

Three texts provide us with some information about the descent of lineages in South India. One, the commentary of the fourteenth century Trilocana's Siddhanta Saravali,[403] presents an account of the origins of the golaki and other lines, and indicates a relationship between these lines and those that took root in South India. Trilocana

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[403] Siddhantasaravali, by Trilocanasivacarya, with commentary of Anantasambhu (Madras: Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, 1972).

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was a commentator of the Somasambhupaddhati,[404] discussed above in the section on initiation, and an author himself of paddhati texts, such as the one I discuss.

The second text is Civakkirayokikal's Civaneriprakacam[405], which cites the origins of Civakkirayokikal's lineage, and again indicates a relationship between his line and lines that descended from places in Northern India. Civakkirayokikal was a contemporary of Namaccivaya, the founder of the line at Tiruvavatuturai. The third text is the seventeenth century Velliyanatattampiran's commentary on Kurunanacampantar's Muttiniccayam.[406] This work provides us with an extremely dense account of lineage genealogies that attempts to show common roots for a number of Tamil lines. Velliyanatattampiran, also known as Velliyavampalattampiran, was a member of Dharmapuram's lineage, and also was recipient of royal patronage from the king of Mysore. Of his works, one, Nanavarana Vilakkamum Nanapatiyamum,[407] refutes some of the Saiva concepts enunciated by Civakkirayokikal, on the grounds that they were more non-dualistic than acceptable among Saiva Siddhantins.[408]

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[404] Somasambhupaddhati, Troisieme Partie, p. liii.

[405] Sri Sivagra-Yogi [Civakkirayokikal], Siva neri-prakasam with Commentary by Sri Nandi Sivagra Yogin, edited by S. Anavaratavinayakam Pillai (Madras: Madras University Tamil Series, 1936).

[406] Kurunanacampantar-muttiniccayam, with commentary by Velliyanatattampiran, edited by Dandapani Tecikar, (Dharmapuram: 1955).

[407] Velliyavampalatampiran, Nananavarana Vilakkamum Nanapatiyamum, edited with introduction by Ragagopalasastriar (Dharmapuram: 1959).

[408] Ibid., p. 6 of introduction by Ragagolapasatriar. Velliyavampalattampiran also refutes works by the fourteenth century Marainanapantaram, again on the grounds that they were not in strict

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Siddhanta Saravali

Part of the commentary of the Siddhanta Saravali, a ritual manual of the fourteenth century Trilocana Sivacaryar, provides us with an attempt to chart out the relationship of the Saiva lineages in the Tamil region. In this context, reference to the golaki matam is made. Ananta Sivacaryar, who is thought to have lived about the same time as Trilocana Sivacaryar, produced the Tamil commentary. The passages of interest refer to the last verses, slokas 89 and 90, of the text's kriyapada.[409] The two verses relate the genealogy of the Amarttaka (Skt. Amardaka) matam (the text uses the term asrama; the commentary uses the term matam), the institution to which Trilocana Sivacarayar appears to have belonged. Verse 89 traces its origins from primordial times through Durvasa and the rsis to its beginnings on earth, while verse 90 follows its descent (gocara) from earlier human eras up to its present (for Trilocana Sivacarya) line.

In the commentary,[410] Ananta Sivacarya turns his attention to the history of the Amardaka matam and its relationship to other institutions. On verse 89 he follows the text in relating the mata's primordial origins and then goes on to describe how the rsis (Kausika,

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conformity with the system as presented in Civananacittiyar, the definitive commentary of Meykantar's Civananapotam.

[409] Siddhanta Saravali, pp. 407ff.

[410] Ibid., p. 409-11.

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Kasyapa, and so on)[411] obtained the wisdom of the Agamas through the worship of Srikanta in the form of Daksinamurti. In turn the rsis had Sanatkumarar, Sanakar, Sanatanar and Sanantar as their disciples. From the Amardaka matam, three other matas arose: the Renapatram, the Kolaki (Golaki) and the Puspagiri. Sanatkumarar and his disciple descendants were each head of one of these matam - Sanatkumarar of the Amardaka, and so on.

After a listing of the matam' different insignia trees, the commentary then turns to their original location, which is identified as a city called Mantrakali on the banks of the Godaveri River (in present day Andhra Pradesh). Siva lived there and, according to Ananta Sivacarya, there alone sivacaryas lived. This statement is apparently not without opposition, as Ananta Sivacarya cites an objection, which he overrides by pointing out that one line of rsis was created by Siva, another line by Brahman. Of the two, only those created by Siva are entitled to undertake parartta puja (parartha puja: puja for the sake of others, i.e., temple rites). The other line presumably is restricted to atmarthapuja, "personal puja". That distinction is significant as we saw above when we examined the complementary relationship between the members of the non-Brahmin lineages and the saivacaryas of the temple.

Ananta Sivacarya then turns to verse 90 and to further "historical" material. He relates that just as there was a four-fold branching of matas, so also did the Saiva brahmins become four-fold: brahmacarya, grhasta, vanaprasta, and yati. Then, after a discussion of

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[411] Ibid., p. 409.

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how the Amardaka matam was distinguished by the presence of a great teacher, Vyapaksa Sambhu, the giver of both bhoga and moksa, Ananta Sivacarya concludes this section with the account of how Rajendra Cola had journeyed to the Godaveri River, the southern Ganges, met the sivacaryas there and brought them to settle in his kingdom, thus establishing the Saiva lineages in Kanchimantalam and Colamantalam.

As we have seen above in the discussion on Tirumalikaittevar and the sarvatevam matam at Tiruvavatuturai, Rajendra patronized sivacaryas who, at least according to epigraphical claims, were part of a larger network that connected them to places outside of the main area of Cola activity in the Kaveri basin. Sarvadevan and his apparent preceptor, Isanasivacarya, the rajaguru of Rajaraja, were settled from elsewhere. These ritual specialists claim affiliations with some of the lineages I have just cited. For example, Somasambhu, who compiled the Somasambhupaddhati, states at the end of his section on nirvanadiksa that he was the head (matadhipati, the lord of the matam) of the Golaki matam.

Sivaeriprakacam

When Civakkirayokikal pays homage to the preceptors of his line, he begins with Nanti,[412] whom he hails as the guardian of Mount Kailasa.

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[412] Civaneriprakacam, p. 7.

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He then salutes Vamadeva as the teacher of his santana.[413] Then after praising Durvasa and Agastya, Civakkirayokikal turns to Sadasivatecikar, "belonging to a brahmin family of aryadesa (the land of the aryans)[414] and hails him as establishing the true Saiva sannyasa order.[415]

The commentary on the invocation to Vamadeva by Cuvanta Nacciyar, the female disciple for whom Civakkirayokikal composed the work, gives us the lineage background of Sadasiva. She traces his line from Kumara on Mount Kailasa to Vamadevamunivar to Nilakantasivacarya to Visvesvarasivacarya, who was established in Kasi, to Sadasivacarya, who came from the Carnatic country to the Cola country.[416] Again this text quite boldly states that the Saiva teachings of Civakkirayokikal had North Indian origins.

Velliyanatattampiran of Dharmapuram also gives us a trajectory of the Saiva lineages.[417] His lineage account is an attempt to

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[413] Ibid. On Vamadeva, see D.C. Sircar, Indian Historical Quarterly, vol. XIV, 1937-38, pp. 96-100; V.S. Pathak, pp. 36-7, observes that an ascetic anmed Vamadeva was greatly honoured by the Kalacuri kings. In fact, homage to a preceptor named Vamadeva appears in Kalachuri inscriptions for more than 200 years.

[414] Ibid, p. 9.

[415] This combination of saiva and sannyasa or sannyasin is somewhat unusual, as the term sannyasin does not seem to appear in the Agamic paddhati texts. The Saiva initiations were quite unrelated to the Dharmasastric stages of life.

[416] Civaneriprakacam, p. 2, in commentary. This lineage is repeated in the Tirukuttam of Suriyanarkoil, p. 12. That traditional account opens with an explanation of how there is the kailasaparamparai and the kantaparamparai, with one coming from Nanti on Mount Kailasa, and the other from Kumara.

[417] Velliyanatattampiran, Muttiniccayam, pp. 57-60.

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reconcile the verse from Tirumular's Tirumantiram which mentions eight lines descending from eight "nantis" with lineage accounts from other sources. Velliyanatattampiran explains that the different lines have come down through the eight Nantis, which he identifies in turn. According to Velliyanatattampiran, four of the Nantis are actually the four sages, Sanakar, Sanatkumara, Sananantar, and Sanatanar, each of whom was responsible for several main lines. Of these four, Velliyanatattampiran states that the Meykantar santana descends from Sanatkumara. He thus identifies different lineages, arranging them each under a "Nanti" category. He then reconciles these first four Nanti categories with the line of descent given by Tirumular, discussed above,[418] by stating that the sages Tirumular cites make up another group of four Nantis.

In the Tirumantiram, Tirumular speaks of four sages, Sivayogamamuni, Patanjali, Vigra, and himself. Here again, Velliyanatattampiran identifies these sages as Nantis, leading large lineage groups. So, for example, Sivayogamamuni is at the head of the Vamadeva santana, and so on. But, this genealogy proves to be too much for even Velliyanatattampiran, for after he has finished listing the descendants of the Meykantar santana, his own, and after he has summarized several lines, he remarks that the details are infinitely complex, and refers the reader to another work, the Cantanavaralaru,[419] a work that, alas, is no longer extant. Obviously the details of these

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[418] See Chapter Four.

[419] Ibid., p. 60.

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lines would defy even a genealogist.

But, under all of this detail is something striking. Velliyanatattampiran, while seeking some arrangement that recognizes some common points of departure for many of the Southern Saiva teaching traditions, has cut himself loose from the affiliation with Northern sites that shows up in the two earlier works I have mentioned. Perhaps by his time, those origins no longer mattered.

In his work, B.G.L. Swamy concludes that Tamil Saivism refers to

> the Golaki-Laksadhyayi school of Saivism which was fostered in the Tamil country and nothing more....When 'Tamil lineages of preceptors' are spoken of, it should clearly refer to the persons of indigenous (Tamil) stock who had accepted the Golaki-Laksadhyayi tenets and nothing more. When 'Tamil madams [matas]' are referred to, such contexts should mean the monasteries started or presided over by the indigenous stock of Tamil-speaking people who had joined the Golaki-Laksadhyayi order and nothing more.[420]

While I cannot wholeheartedly endorse these conclusions as they present a static view of religious development in South India, the material he and others have worked though indicates some of the sources that contributed to the institutional make-up of the later velala lineages. The material provides us with some clues first as to why the boundaries of the Saiva Siddhanta commentarial tradition are drawn at about the twelfth century, even though some of its religiosity reaches back earlier to the works of the nayanmar. Secondly, it suggests that the roles the later non-Brahmin lineages assumed in temple affairs were adapted from the earlier patterns of the Golaki and other lineages.

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[420] B.G.L. Swamy, "The Golaki School of Saivism in the Tamil Country", p. 205.

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What religious significance was attached to the settlement of ascetics and other members of spiritual lineages at temple sites is the next question this work addresses. I take this question up in the following section. In Part Three, I will begin with the task of defining the matam. In the first chapter of that section, I argue that the matam was first and foremost part of the temple complex, and that it was a location where a special form of gifting took place. The chapter that follows will address that rite of gifting. In these two chapters, my concern is not with what the lineage members did while residing in matas, for I recognize that they often played roles in the administration of the economic and other affairs of the temple, and its surrounding environment. Rather, in these two chapters, my focus is on the religious attitudes that brought them to the temple setting in the first place.

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PART THREE

MATAM

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CHAPTER SIX

THE PLACE

The ascetic recipients of many of the endowments recorded on temple walls lived in matas, but matam, or matha in Sanskrit, is no easy term to define. The sixth century Sanskrit dictionary, the Amarakosa, glosses matha simply as "residence of an ascetic".[421] "Monastery" and "seminary" are other common ways the term is translated into English.[422] Such translations connote retreat, separation and seclusion, yet, when the word matha (or matam) is found in inscriptions from temple sites,

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421 Amarakosa with the Unpublished South Indian Commentaries Amarapadavivrti of Lingayasurin and the Amarapadaparijata of Mallinatha, Critical Edition with Introduction by Prof. A. A. Ramanatha (Adayar: Adayar Library and Research Centre, 1971), p. 68.

422 In most scholarly works that make reference to mathas, the term is taken to mean "monastery" or "seminary" See, for example, Burton Stein, Peasant Society in Medieval South India, p. 232; K.A.N. Nilakantha Sastri, The Colas, passim; B.G.L. Swamy, "The Golaki School of Saivism in the Tamil Country", p. 174 and passim; David Lorenzen, The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saiva Sects, p. xi and passim. Sanskrit dictionaries cite these meanings, but also include the idea of the dwelling place of an ascetic. See Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary p. 774; Apte, A Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 417; Sircar, Epigraphical Glossary. Interestingly enough, Tamil-English dictionaries also add the idea of choultry and rest house to this list of meanings. See The Tamil Lexicon, vol. v., p. 3020 and Winslow, A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary, p. 837. T.N. Subramanian, South Indian Temple Inscriptions, vol. III, Annexure, p. xxxvi, provides only the meaning of feeding house: "place where pilgrims and religious mendicants and tapasvins are fed."

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its usage inevitably suggests that a matha is part of the temple complex or an ancillary structure connected to the temple.[423] One of the earliest epigraphical uses of the term matha appears in a sixth century inscription recently edited by K. Ramesh and S. Tewari.[424] This epigraph refers to a North Indian king's munificence as demonstrated in his construction of halls, wells, mathas, pleasure gardens and temples of the gods. Here the term matha is included in a list of places or buildings. In the inscription, the king is not praised for founding monastic institutions or seminaries, he is credited with having had buildings built. A matha, like a hall, well, or garden, is one such structure.

As it appears in South Indian inscriptions dating to the Cola period and earlier, the term matha (or matam) often seems to refer to resthouses and places where ascetics, mendicants, pilgrims, and others

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[423] In his discussion of a Tiruvorriyur inscription referring to Chaturanana Pandita, a Cola general turned ascetic (Epigraphica Indica, vol XXVII, no. 47, "Tirruvorriyur Inscription of Chaturanana Pandita: 20th year of Krishna III", p. 297), V. Raghavan comments that "if we interpret [epigraph] No. 371 of 1911 of the Madras Epigraphical Collection too literally Tiruvorriyur-udaiyar-koyilil-madamudaiya Chaturnana Panditanum - we may suppose that the matha was within the temple." Raghavan also observes (p. 296, n.4) that prescribed habitats of Saivite recluses include caves (guha) and man-forsaken buildings that are sometimes classified as caves, but nowhere in the canonical works of the Pasupata sects is an aspiring ascetic (sadhaka) referred to as resorting to an established matha for his practice sadhana.

[424] K. Ramesh and S. Tewari, "Risthal Inscription of Aulikara Prakasadharmma [Vikrama] Year 572" in The Journal of the Epigraphical Society, vol. 10, 1983, pp. 96-104. Here Drs. Ramesh and Tewari give "monastery" as the meaning of matha.

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are fed.[425]

Typical of such references are epigraph no. 272 of 1927, from Sirapuram, Tanjavur District, dated to the 4th year of Vikrama Cola, which records land purchased by a Kutta Rajendra Colar for maintaining a matam called Kulottunka Cola matam at Sirapuram and feeding the mahesvaras there; 234 of 1943 from Singalantapuram in the Trichy District from 34th year of Rajarajesvara Cola which refers to construction of matam by a Tannarasa, for feeding of intinerant mahesvaras and to a grant of land for its upkeep and for maintenance of antaras (temple servants) looking after the gardens attached to the matam; 197 of 1943 from Pandiyur in Ramnad District which refers to a grant for land for feeding paratecis (wandering mendicants) in a matam called after Sundara-Pandya at Ramesvaram; 147 of 1925, inscribed during the reign of Kulottunka I, which records the remission of taxes on lands given to temple for feeding devotees who came to worship the god on festive days in a Sivalokanayakan-matam; and 159 of 1925, dated to 1121 C.E., which mentions that students of grammar and medicine were among those to be fed in a matam at Tiruvavatuturai. As used in these and many similar inscriptions, the term matam is not referring to a secluded monastic retreat, but a public shelter or feeding house, a place where religious pilgrims, mendicants and others were received.

The usage of the term matam as a shelter and place of refuge has prevailed. Even today in India one finds all sorts of shelters,

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425 T.N. Subramanian, South Indian Temple Inscriptions, vol. III, Annexure, p. xxxvi.

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resthouses, guesthouses and feeding houses maintained by various groups, ascetic and not, that bear this label. These shelters are usually located at temple centres and other places of pilgrimage[426] and are open to anyone belonging to the caste group, religious organization, sectarian tradition, or whatever, that looks after the shelter. In such places, a person journeying to a sacred site can seek refuge in strange surroundings, eat with the security that no caste rules will be inadvertently violated, and share the spiritual experience of pilgrimage with others who follow the same religious tradition. Staying in a matam is part of the act of undertaking a pilgrimage, which in turn is an important aspect of India's temple tradition. Just as the pilgrimage circuit maps out the sacred landscape of a Hindu, matas map out the field of operation of the different institutions and organizations that maintain these resthouses. Though the types of organizations that run matas have greatly changed since Cola times, something of the earlier sense of the term remains: a shelter for someone who is no longer at home, whether on permanent basis as in the case of an ascetic, or on a temporary basis as in the case of someone on religious pilgrimage.[427]

In Cola inscriptions, matas serve a variety of different groups

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426 For example, there is a list of matas and choultries under the heading of rest houses in A. Uthandaram, A Pilgrim's Guide to Rameswaram and Dhanushkadi (Ramesvaram:n.d.), pp. 45-47.

427 David Dean Shulman, Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 20, suggests, "pilgrimage comes to substitute for sannyasa" for the householder.

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which have no common connection with each other except that they are all separated from family and kin in some sense or at certain times. There are matas for feeding itinerant mendicants,[428] for students,[429] for feeding ascetics (tapasyar),[430] sivayogins well-versed in the Vedas,[431] for feeding Brahmins on special occasions,[432] for feeding devotees attending temple festivals,[433] and matas housing all sorts of ascetics belonging to all sorts of lineages and traditions. In later inscriptions, there are instances of groups such as weavers banding together to maintain a matas, apparently for members of their own caste grouping.[434] Of the types of people for whom provisions were made in such inscriptions, many were served by matas only while certain circumstances prevailed, such as studentship; yet there were others whose separation from their natal group assumed an institutionalized form. This group includes ascetics, initiated monks, religious preceptors, and the like, whose membership in a "fictive" lineage - that is, a lineage by which entry was gained through initiation, rather than birth - replaced kin ties. The institutional make-up of such "fictive"

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[428] A.R.E. no. 231 of 1921.

[429] A.R.E. nos. 504 of 1909 and 159 of 1925.

[430] A.R.E. nos. 681 of 1905; 144 of 1925.

[431] A.R.E. nos. 243 of 1925; 269 of 1911-12; 186 of 1895.

[432] A.R.E. nos. 237 of 1927; 269 of 1911-12.

[433] A.R.E. nos. 334 of 1904; 148 and 155 of 1925; 57 of 1913.

[434] A.R.E. no. 103 of 1906, dated saka 1554, at the time of the Vijayanagara Achyutiyadeva-Maharaya.

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lineages was further characterized by adherence to one or another of the philosophical-religious systems (Saiva, Pasupata, Kalamukha, etc.) mentioned in the early medieval commentaries and disseminated by the teaching tradition of the lineage.[435]

Separated from home and family, members of these traditions stayed in matas provided for and often identified with particular lineages. Hence, for example, in discussion of inscriptions which record the activities of different members of a line of Kalamukha ascetics who were located at Tiruvorriyur, scholars have made reference to a "Kalamukha matha" at Tiruvorriyur.[436] This matam is identified with the Kalamukha lineage lodged there, though obviously the shelter, the matam, and the group that stayed there were different entities. This observation may seem niggling, but the blurring of the distinction between a matam and the people who lived there has contributed to the tendency to think of a matam as a monastic institution. Attention is thus focussed on the ascetic "institution" - the "monastery" as it were - and the other features of a matam recorded in incriptions and other sources - a shelter, located at temple sites, in which certain activities relating to the site took place - are ignored. Some matas did indeed house lines of ascetics, but our understanding of what matas were in medieval India is contorted when that alone - a feature

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[435] See discussion in Chapter One; see also M. Rajamanickam, The Development of Saivism in South India (Dharmapuram:1964), pp. 67-80; D. Lorenzen, The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas, pp. 1-12; R.G. Bhandarkar, Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems (Varanasi: Indological Book House, reprint, 1965), pp. 48-67 and 115-42.

[436] See, for example, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Colas, p. 433.

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characteristic only of certain matas - is emphasized.

Though there have not been many studies on matas per se, often when a matam is mentioned in a work, it is used as a referent for a group of ascetics or line of preceptors. Such usage commonly appears in English writings. Thus, for example, when a report in the Indian Law Review[437] states that Kurunanancampantar founded a matam at Dharmapuram, the author of the report is actually referring to the beginning of a collateral lineage, headed by Kurunanacampantar, who located himself at Dharmapuram. Likewise, Miller and Weertz use the term this way when they identify mathas with the monastic orders "organized around the concept of a teaching tradition (sampradaya) related to a famous teacher (Acharya) who first enunciated the philosophical-religious system of the order."[438]

In Tamil sources, however, the term matam is sometimes used as an indicator, an "address", for the ascetic brotherhood, that is, the group of preceptors, their disciples, what they did, and the place where they are headquartered. For example, there are several copper-plate grants which designate the Tiruvavatuturai matam[439] or individuals of

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437 I.L.R. 10 Madras, p. 387.

438 David M. Miller and Dorothy C. Wertz, Hindu Monastic Life and the Monks and Monasteries of Bhubaneswar (Montreal and London: McGill and Queen's University Press, 1976), p. 4. See also pp. 5-7.

439 In the Tirukuttalam Plates of Sivala Varagunarama alias Pandya Kulasekharadeva Dikshitar. Saka 1670, (Travancore Archaeological Series, vol. 1, no. XVI, pp. 149-51), a sayaraksara kattalai is endowed to the temple and placed under the management of the Tiruvavatuturai matam (lines 29-32). Some grants (recorded on the copper-plates in possession of these centres) are given in the name of the head of the institution whose title only indicates the location of the centre.

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the Tiruvavatuturai matam[440] to oversee certain endowments. In such grants, an individual is designated is the overseer, but the reference to his relationship to the matam at Tiruvavatuturai implicates the brotherhood located at Tiruvavatuturai in the carrying out of these responsibilities. However, this is not the only way the "address" of the brotherhood is given. Quite often, a member is simply identified by his relationship to his preceptor, as in a 1793 grant which appoints Nilakanta Tampiran, sisya (disciple) of Civakkirayokikal, the ascetic preceptor (ativarnarai acarammana) of Suriyanarkoil, as administrator of a certain kattalai at Tiruvitaimarutur.[441]

In the grants I have examined that pertain to endowments to support the religious activities of these brotherhoods, the actual use of the term matam is rather infrequent. Instead, the name of the place where the matam is located suffices, as shown in a 1732 endowment which contributed to two rituals celebrated by the brotherhood located at Tiruvavatuturai.[442] The grant was made for "mahesvarapuja and the puja of the Pantara Cannati Ampalavana of Tiruvavatuturai (Tiruvavatuturaip pantara cannati avarkatku ampalavanar pucaikkum makesuvara pucaikkum)".

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[440] Copper plate no. 16, A.R.E. 1924-45, dated saka 1657, registers a grant to a temple near Mysore by merchants representing fifty-six countries. The grant turned the duties collected on a long list of merchandise such as yarn, tobacco, areca-nut, pepper and sandalwood, over to the temple for use in worship and offerings. The entire charity was put under the management of the pantaracanniti of Tiruvavatuturai.

[441] This grant comes from one of the unpublished copper-plate inscriptions in the possession of Tiruvavatuturai.

[442] This grant is also from the set of unpublised copper-plates in possession by Tiruvavatuturai.

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Pantara Cannati (sacred treasure or sacred presence) is, as I noted above, the title used by the heads of the lines of velala preceptors. The use of the name of the locality, Tiruvavatuturai, in the title is typical of epigraphical form.

Similarly, when any of the members of the institution - that is, the ascetics living in the matam at Tiruvavatuturai or any of its outposts - refer to themselves corporately, they use such phrases as the Tirukailai paramparai, the lineage [descending] from Mount Kailasa. Their histories of their institution bear titles such as Tirukkayilayaparamparait Tiruvavatuturai Atinak Kuruparamparai Vilakkam,[443] the "elucidation (or illustration, vilakkam) of the line of teachers (kuruparamparai) of the centre (atinam, a term which came to replace matam in later copper-plate grants) at Tiruvavatuturai [which was of] the lineage [descending from] Mount Kailasa. As evinced from such instances of self-reference, membership in a lineage was the defining characteristic of their corporate make-up.

The referent of the term matam was the place, not the corporate group. Matas were built, as demonstrated by a tenth century Calukya inscription[444] which describes the activities of a preceptor,

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[443] Melakaram Cuppiramanyakkavirar, Tirukkayilayaparamparait Tiruvavatuturai Atinam Kuruparamparai Vilakkam (Tiruvavaduturai: 1928). A recent history of Dharmapuram's institution (Ira Celvakkanapati, "Tarumai Atina Kuruparamparai Varalaru" in Anaittulaka Caiva Cittanta Mutal Karuttarankam Vila Malar (Dharmapuram: Dharmapuram Atinam, 1984) pp. 100-138) has a similar title. Translated into English, the title reads, "A History of the Line of Teachers of the Institution [atinam] at Dharmapuram".

[444] EI XXXIII, pp. 161-70, text 11.58-60.

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Prabhutarasi III, who is said to have built a beautiful stone temple and a matam of three stories in his guru and predecessor's presence. A 1162 C.E. inscription from the Kedaresvara temple in Belagave, translated by J. Fleet, brings out this sense of place :

> There is the Kodiya-matha, which has become the abode of the god Kedara of the south...a place devoted to the observances of Saiva saints leading perpetually the life of celibate religious students...a place where commentaries are composed...on grammatical works, - a place where commentaries are composed on the six systems of philosophy...a place where commentaries are composed on the lakula-siddhanta...and other Yogasastras, - a place for (studying) the eighteen puranas, the law books, and all the poetical compositions, the dramas... and the other various kinds of learning, - a place where food is always given to the poor, the helpless, the lame, the blind, the deaf, and to professional story-tellers, singers, musicians, bards, players, and ministrels...to the naked and the crippled, and to (Jain and Buddhist) mendicants [ksapanakas], to (brahmana) mendicants who carry a triple staff [tridandins], to hamsa and paramahamsa ascetics, and to all other beggars from many countries [nana-desa-bhisuka-jana], - a place where many helpless sick people are harboured and treated, - a place of assurance of safety for all living creatures [emphasis mine].[445]

Inscriptions such as this one have tended to puzzle scholars who are hard pressed to explain such eclectic benevolence and doctrinal tolerance on the part of a group of monks. The record attributes to the matam study of nearly the whole of Sanskrit learning as well as worthy charity to practically every type of the homeless, including professional itinerants and both the voluntary and involuntary beggar. If rhetoric and hyperbole played any role at all in public announcements, as the metaphors and similes which appear elsewhere in

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[445] Epigraphica Indica, vol. V, no. 222, "Inscriptions at Ablur", edited and translated by John F. Fleet, also cited in David N. Lorenzen, The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas: Two Lost Saivite Sects (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), p.103f.

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this record suggest, this description was not meant to be taken literally, as has been done.[446] Rather its comprehensiveness conveys the sense that this centre was a premier site of dharmic activity, a reputation that would greatly enhance that of its benefactors and patrons.

A line of preceptors, who are identified as Kalamukhas, were settled at this site and closely associated with what happened in the matam, but under all of the fine rhetoric in this inscription and in others like it, it is much less clear that they were behind the endowments for the charitable activities which took place at this temple centre. The preceptors may have been instrumental in administering the charitable activities, but they themselves were recipients of official patronage, a feature of matas that should not be minimized. To bring about the presence of learned and accomplished ascetics was one of the acts of religious merit incumbent upon the king and his representatives. This mix of kings, ascetics, sacred places, and charitable activities gives us clues needed to place our understanding of matas in the proper context.

Ties to Temple Sites

The matam was what connected a line of preceptors to the site. In a very real sense the matam enabled a lineage to be present at not just any site, but inevitably a temple site. This connection to temple

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[446] D. Lorenzen, p. 105.

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sites appears to define a mata's purpose, for inscriptional evidence suggests that the field of activity of a matam (i.e., the place) consisted largely of providing for certain types of people in a way that conformed to certain cultural expectations. The actions of everyone involved in the transactions taking place within the matam related to the particular Hindu attitudes and values. Clarification of these cultural expectations helps us make sense out of the activities going on within a matam. That understanding in turn contextualizes the seemingly contradictory roles of landlord and temple administrator assumed by the ascetic brotherhoods of the later medieval period which our study concerns.

While material about matas culled from temple inscriptions biases analysis of what I have called cultural expectations, the matas I discuss cannot be separated from their temple settings. All of the present-day sites of the velala centres (or matas) are found at temple sites and the outposts they maintain are likewise located near to and sometimes within temple complexes. All evidence indicates that they have always had this close association with temples. As well, matas are depicted as shelters adjacent to pilgrimage places in Tamil literary works such as the Periya Puranam which finds one or another nayanmar staying in a matam while moving from place to place.[447]

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[447] See, for example, the story of Cuntaramurti encountering Siva as an old man in a matam at Tiruvatikai (Tiruttontar Makkatai (Madras: South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1970) or Appar and Tirunanacampantar both staying in a matam at Tiruvilimilalai; M. Rajamanickam, The Development of Saivism in South India, p. 127, provides a list of sites that had matas where Appar, Tirunanacampantar, and other nayanmar stayed.

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earth is sacred, for it is all the embodiment of the Divine....Like the body, the creation is differentiated in power and in function. Some earthly places reveal the Divine more readily than others. As the Mahabharata puts it, 'Just as certain parts of the body are called pure, so are certain parts of the earth and certain waters called holy.'"[451]

What power is offered at such a site is thus described:

> There whatever is sacrificed, chanted, given in charity, or suffered in penance, even in the smallest amount, yields endless fruit because of the power of that place. Whatever fruit is said to accrue from many thousands of lifetimes of asceticism, even more than that is obtainable from but three nights of fasting in this place.[452]

Temples, consecrated and periodically reconsecrated at such places, became the focus of attention, especially for the theistic traditions which valued closeness to the deity. But often these sites, extolled in the temple chronicles (the Sanskrit mahatmyas, stalapuranas and Tamil talapuranas) as places where the deity chose to be located, had traditions of liminality - to use Turner's term - or hierophany - to use Eliade's - that long preceded a particular temple's theistic tradition.[453]

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[451] Diana L. Eck, Banaras, p. 34, citing the Mahabharata XII.111.16.

[452] Ibid., p. 35, citing the Trishalisetu by Narayana Bhatta, Anandasrama Sanskrit Series No. 78 (Poona: BORI, 1915), p. 131.

[453] See Eck, Banaras, p. 35; David Dean Shulman, Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 26-8; and P.V. Kane, History of Dharmasastra, Government Oriental Series Class B, No. 6, vol. 4 (Poona: B.O.R.I., 1973), pp. 552-61.

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Particular sites were points of congregation because they were charged with the sacred power of the place, which in turn was recharged by the holiness generated by the religious practices of the learned brahmins, saints, ascetics, and even ordinary people who congregated there. P.V. Kane cites verses from the Skandapurana which call tirthas places of the earth where good men gather for the collection of merit. The purana goes on to observe that the main purpose of going to such places is to associate with holy men.[454]

Rites conducted at holy sites are generally considered auspicious,[455] as the power of the act and the nature of its setting feed into each other. The stories recorded in the temple talapuranas typically describe this interaction. To illustrate, we can turn to a story from the Siva temple at Tiruvaiyaru:[456]

> Sucharita, a young brahmin, overcome with sorrow at the death of his parents, left the banks of the river Gotami to undertake a pilgrimage. He came to Tiruppalanam, where in his sleep, Yama appeared to him and warned him that he had only five more days to live. Quite frightened, he reached Tiruvaiyaru. There he prayed to the sage Vasista who instructed him in the pancaksarajapa (the recitation of the mantra, "om namaccivaya").

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[454] P.V. Kane, History of Dharmasastra (hereafter cited as HDhS), vol. 4, p. 555, citing the Skandhapurana, Uttarakandha, 237.25-27. Similar verses occur in other puranas.

[455] For example, the Visnudharmottarapurana, III.273.7 and 9 states, "When resort is made to a tirtha, it removes the sins of the sinful and tends to the increase of merit in the case of the good...a holy place yields fruit to men of all varnas and asramas. Cited in Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, p. 563.

[456] Visvalinga Thambiran, Sri Panchanathiswaraswami Temple, Tiruvaiyaru (Dharmapuram: Dharmapuram Adhinam, 19554, 1965), Adhinam Publication No. 309, p. 7.

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> Sucharita began doing worship and japa to the best of his ability. On the fifth day, Yama appeared. On behalf of the boy, Vasistha also prayed to the deity of the place, who sent his guards to keep Yama away. Yama, however, put up a good fight, so Siva appeared in the form of Alkontesa, vanquished Yama and blessed Sucharita with long life. Alkontesa then revived Yama and warned him not to bother devotees living in this holy place.

The account extols the power both of Sucharita's newly learned ritual practices as well as that of the site. This interaction is an important, though often overlooked, aspect of sacred sites, comparable to the necessary periodic revitalization of a temple's power through the continual rites of pratistha and kumbhabhisekam. These rites endow the temple complex and the images located within it with divine life and power.[457] When a temple is first built it is thus consecrated, but its divine life or power must be continually renewed. The periodic repetition of the kumbhabhisekam ceremony is part of the continual process of vitalization and renewal. The temple's life force must be continually recharged, a necessity acknowledged in the ritual texts.

This same dynamic understanding of the correlative nature of divine power and transhuman ritual is what informs the close associations between sacred sites and saintly people who participate in transhuman rites. Power is no static or inert state; unlike purity, an attribute which is to be protected, power is a form of energy that must be generated continually. Medieval Hindu sectarian texts - the agamas,

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457 J. Gonda, " Prasistha", Studia Indologica Internationalia, vol. 1 (1951), pp. 1-37.

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samhitas and tantras - are centred around power and perfection gained through ritual acts and contemplative meditation.[458] In these sectarian systems power is gained through the correct use of mantra, which engage the adept in a form of consubstantive communion with the power of the mantra and its corresponding transcendent form, usually conceived as a deity. As there were many forms of mantra and different levels of use gained only through preparatory initiation (diksa), the resulting power was in itself not necessarily "good" power, or power that had a positive, benevolent effect. The suspicion of certain types of ascetics[459] show a wariness of yogic powers and their abuse and misuse. Depending upon the aim of the adept, several factors, among them temporal and spatial setting, contributed to the type of effect disseminated.[460] Choice of cremation ground or consecrated tirtha was

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[458] Jan Gonda, Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit, II, no. 1 of A History of Indian Literature (Wiesbaden: 1977), pp. 186ff.; Helene Brunner-Lachaux, "Introduction" in Somasambhupaddhati, Troisieme Partie, pp. i-li; Teun Goudriaan, "Introduction" in Sanjukta Gupta, Dirk Jan Hoens, and Teun Goudriaan, Hindu Tantrism, Handbuch der Orientalistik (Jan Gonda, General Editor), Zweite Abteilung 4. Band, 2. Abschnitt (Leiden and Koln: E.J. Brill, 1979), pp. 10-11 and 20f; Sanjukta Gupta, "The Changing Pattern of Pancaratra Initiation: A Case Study in the Reinterpretation of Ritual" in Ria Kloppenborg, Selected Studies on Ritual in the Indian Religions: Essays to D.J. Hoens (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), pp. 69-91.

[459] See, for example, the description of "good" and "bad" ascetics in the Vaikhanasa Smartasutra (8.6f), translated by Caland, p. 195, no. 2. See also Teun Goudriaan's discussion ("Introduction, History, and Philosophy", pp. 24-5) of the ways Tantric ascetics have been portrayed in Sanskrit court literature.

[460] See Jonathan Parry, "Sacrificial Death and the Necrophagous Ascetic" in Death and the Regeneration of Life edited by Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 92f and Sanjukta Gupta, "Modes of Worship and Meditation", pp. 134-42.

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as important a step in the ritual process as were the invocations made with mantra.

For the followers of the medieval theistic schools, which included the Pancaratra (later known as Visistavaita) and Saiva systems, the aims of the religious practice (sadhana) embraced not only release (mukti), but also bhukti, personal gain and general prosperity.[461] The option of bhukti and the state of asceticism make no contradiction. Not all ascetics were world-renouncing; though they may have severed ties with their natal group, many followed philosophical traditions that admitted and affirmed the physical world. This acceptance of the physical world acknowledged it as an arena of operation for both the deity's powers and for those who aspired to supreme states of knowledge.[462] In the Pancaratra system, for example, several texts maintain that there is such inherent power in vyuha-mantras (the mantras gained after vyuha initiation), that they produce unsolicited prosperity, even though the adept himself or herself may be concerned

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[461] On the connection between mukti and bhukti from a Saiva prespective, see Somasambhupaddhati: Troisieme Partie, p. 80, vs. 97-98; p. 206, vs. 41; etc. Helene Brunner-Lachaux, "Introduction" in ibid. comments about a discussion in the text relating to the fire sacrifice, which "serait parfaitment hors de propos si le manuel ne s'addressait qu'aux adeptes dont le seul but est la liberation (les mumuksu), mais qui se comprend si l'on pense que beaucoup d'entre eux desirent d'abord obtenir des pouvoirs, humbles ou eleves, ou gagner les Terres de jouissances (ce sont les bubuhuksu)...." On Pancaratra, see Sanjukta Gupta, "The Changing Pattern of Pancaratra Initiation", p. 74.

[462] On the acceptance of the physical world, see Surendranath Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, vol. 5, The Southern Indian Schools of Saivism (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint, 1977), pp. 4-20 for a discussion of the schools of Saivism that accept God as the instrumental, but not material cause of the world. See also K. Sivaraman, pp. 392f.

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with mukti, or release.[463]

The Presence of an Ascetic

Where do matas fit in here? They were places of congregation that served several purposes. For one, the presence of an ascetic enhanced the "sacrality" of a site. It is common belief that the place once occupied by an ascetic has lingering effects of the austerities and rites performed there.[464] Dharmapuram, one of the velala centres of this study, houses a camati shrine that is especially venerated in this way. This is the camati of Anantaparavacar, the ascetic who was designated as first successor by the founder of the lineage at Dharmapuram. This individual never headed the institution in any capacity; it seems that he was more spiritually evolved than the occasion demanded. Accounts of early succession claim that once Anantaparavacar was imparted through unction the "supreme knowledge of God",[465] that is, designated successor through a rite of unction, he

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[463] Sanjukta Gupta, "The Changing Pattern of Pancaratra Initiation", p. 81.

[464] The residence of the twentieth century mystic, Ramana Maharishi, at Tiruvannamalai, is an example. Though it was frequented by followers seeking spiritual guidance during his lifetime, and has remained a pilgrimage place since his death, the site consists of little more than the cell where he stayed and practiced his austerities. Ramana founded no order, gave no formal instruction; his presence in his dwelling - his matam -is what the pilgrims seek.

[465] Ira Celvakanapati, "Tarumai atina kuruparamparai varalaru" in Anaittulak Caiva Cittanta Mutal Kuruttarankam Vila Malar (Dharmapuram: 1984), p. 108; Mu. Arunachalam, Guru Jnana Sambandhar, p. 55. The phrase, "supreme knowledge of God" refers to what is imparted in acaryabhisekam.

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passed almost immediately into eternal camati. The site where this event happened and where Anantaparavacar remains is marked by a shrine known as a camati.[466]

According to explanations provided by the followers of the Saiva tradition, a saint's camati marks the "attainment of the fullness of Siva" (civaparipuranam).[467] The person in this state never quite loses his or her individuality, but nonetheless is given to complete participation in the essence (or fullness, for they are both the same) of Siva.[468] This explanation follows the tenets of Saiva Siddhanta, a system that accepts the eternality not only of the godhead, but also of individual souls and matter.[469]

Disciples of Dharmapuram feel that Anantaparavacar, like others

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[466] Tiruvavatuturai Atinam Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, (Tiruvavatuturai: 1928). The Tirumantiram, vs. 1887-1922, refers to the internment of the initiated Saiva ascetics.

[467] The hagiographies use this term. See Ira. Celvakkanapati, "Tarumatina Kuruparamparai Varalaru", passim and Melakaram Cuppiramanyakkavirar, Tiruvavatuturai Atinam Kuruparamparai Vilakkam, Tiruvavatuturai.

[468] See discussion by Helene Brunner-Lachaux, Somasambhupaddhati, Troisieme partie, p. 408 n. 448; Tirumular's Tirumantiram,(v.1436) describes this state, "In Iruvinaiyoppu, the arut-sakti (grace of Siva) mainfests as guru and where it removes away all idiosyncracies of the soul by imparting nana (wisdom gained through initiation), its (soul's) action ceases, the three malas (impurities) are exhausted and the soul identifies [with Siva]." (cited in M. Rajamanickam, The Development of Saivism in South India, p. 297); K. Sivaraman, Saivism in its Philosophical Perspective, p. 412, describes this state: "Freedom from pasutva is continuous with Sivatva."

[469] V.A. Devasenapati, Saivasiddhanta as expounded in the Sivajnanasiddiyar and its Six Commentaries, Madras University Philosophical Series no. 7 (Madras: Madras University, 1974), pp. 225-35 and K. Sivaraman, Saivism in its Philosophical Perspective, pp. 7-12.

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interred in a camati, is not dead, but still continues on with the performance of his internal rites[470] in the state of camati. Further, some of the people at Dharmapuram who offered opinions on the camati associated Anantaparavacar with the living presence of the centre at Dharmapuram. An employee of the Adhinam stated that he believed the divine grace emanating from Anantaparavacar in his state of camati was a source of spiritual guidance. He also volunteered the idea that the very existence of Dharmapuram devolved from the camati. Another lay person even ventured as far as to say that because of Anantapravacar, India was able to exist. The intent of such reflections, if my understanding is correct, was to suggest that the very existence of the surrounding world was closely connected with, if not dependent upon, the continued performance of the rites maintained by Dharmapuram's lineage. Moreover, these rites continued not only through the living members of the lineage, but also through those who had already reached attainment. The statements of these individuals at Dharmapuram gave the impression that that they felt their well-being was assured as a result of the presence of this camati and their acknowledgement of it.

Ascetic's Relationship with Sacred Sites

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[470] These rites are antaryaga puja, an internalized puja in which "the heart in the form of a lotus stands for the microcosm of the thirty-six tattvas which compose the world and the Transcendent (Siva) is involved as being seated on this lotus seat, which is symbolic of the relation in which the self stands to it." K. Sivaraman, p. 404, citing the Civananapotamapatiyam of Civananayogin.

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Another purpose a matam served was to provide a place for ritual transactions to take place, for how an ascetic, a group of ascetics, or other such people came to gather at a particular place was not entirely on their whim alone. Rather, provisions were often made to attract and settle them there. Allusion is made to such effort in Tirumular's Tirumantiram, one of the works of the Tamil Saivite canon.[471] In several verses,[472] this work indicates that mahesvaras offer more spiritual wealth than the temple itself. The Tirumantiram speaks of the feeding or honouring of mahesvaras as generating more spiritual merit than the consecration of a thousand temples.[473] It also states that giving day-food to mahesvaras will yield more benefits than granting a thousand villages to Brahmins;[474] a handful of food given to the ash-smeared bhaktas will yield greater benefits than the food given to a crore of brahmins who perform sacrifices.[475]

Mahesvara, like matam, is a term for which precise definition is problematic. It is derived from Siva's epithet, mahesvara, "great lord". Sankara in his Brahmasutrabhasya[476] notes that the term refers

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[471] Tirumantiram, vss. 1860 and 1862, cited in M. Rajamanickam, The Development of Saivism in South India, pp.82-3.

[472] Ibid., vs 1860.

[473] Ibid., vs 1861, Rajamanickam, p. 82.

[474] Ibid., vs. 1860, p. 82.

[475] Ibid., vs. 1861, p. 83.

[476] Samkara refers to mahesvaras in his discussion of different views of instrumental and material causes. According to Sankara, those who hold the view that Siva is the instrumental, but not material cause of the universe are allied to or identical with mahesvaras, who

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to a follower of Siva who is of a dualistic or a qualified-dualistic/non-dualistic philosophical system. According to Sankara's definition, mahesvara thus can be taken to refer to a Saiva ascetic or more generally, a Saivite who follows one or another of the medieval sectarian traditions. Tirumular cites six groups, the pasupatam, mahavratam, kapalikam, vamam, bhairavam, and saivam.[477] Tirumular appears to reserve the term mahesvara for members of the sixth group, those who admit the doctrine of pati, pasu, and pasam and follow it according to the Agamic ways, i.e., those who were initiated into of one or another of the lines of transmission (santana).[478] In other words, for Tirumular, mahesvaras were consecrated members of the same tradition he followed; the spiritual wealth generated when mahesvaras were ritually honoured was something that he, as a member of their tradition, directly participated in.

In some places where the term appears in inscriptions, it suggests a meaning of initiated devotees. Calukya kings, who appear to

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"maintain that the five categories, viz. effect [karya], cause [karana], union [yoga], ritual [vidhi], the end of pain [duhkhanta] were taught by the Lord Pasupati to the end of breaking the bonds of the animal [pasu, i.e., the soul]; Pasupati is, according to them, the Lord, the operative [instrumaental] cause." (Samkara, Brahma-sutra-bhasya ii, 2.37, trans. G. Thibaut, vol. XXXIV of Sacred Books of the East, Oxford: 1904). This description is appropriate for a number of groups, including the later Saiva Siddhantins.

[477] Tirumantiram, v. 1449, cited in Rajamanickam, p. 67.

[478] Rajamanickam, p. 71. See also my discussion in Chapter Two on initiation and tradition.

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have received diksa from Lakulisa Pasupata preceptors[479] called themselves parama mahesvaras in their inscriptions, as did the Candratreyas and Kakatiyas.[480] The Kakatiyas had close associations with the preceptors of the golaki matha, some of whom are described as the diksa gurus of the Kalacuri and Kakatiya kings.[481] The term was occasionally assumed by Cola kings. Kulottunga I used the title at least once[482].

The term mahesvara also appears to have had a technical meaning. It appears regularly in inscriptions from across South India. A typical reference is a thirteenth century record from Manampati, in the Tanjavur District, which records an order by the nagarattar (the assembly of a mercantile centre) to the devakanmis (temple employees) and mahesvaras of the temple, permitting the latter to supply a certain amount of lilies from the tank for a festival. Another, from Tiruppanantal, dates to the 11th year of Kulottunga, and records a notice to the sivabrahmanas, the mahesvaras and devakanmis of the temple about the reversion of an earlier order. This and many other inscriptions, suggest that the mahesvaras formed some sort of corporate

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[479] H.C. Ray, Dynastic History of Northern India, vol. 2, pp. 942-1041.

[480] Ibid., pp. 680-727.

[481] Ibid., pp. 762-800.

[482] A.R.E. no. 312 of 1901.

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group within the administration of temple affairs,[483] possibly not unlike the later pantara. These inscriptions suggest a strong presence of mahesvaras within the temple complex. The next chapter takes up the topic of mahesvarapuja, and argues that it is a rite which helps explain how lineages came to be settled at temple sites.

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[483] Burton Stein (1980:236), following the cues of the epigrapher in the 1909 A.R.E. (par. 53: 103) and M. Rajamanickam (1964: 81-83; 232-239; passim.), maintains that mahesvaras were non-Brahmin teachers. Both of Stein's sources draw attention to variance between the followers of South Indian Saivism (mahesvaras) and "orthodox" Brahmins, but Stein was oblivious to important distinctions. The 1909 A.R.E. discussion is misleading as it assumes advaita to be the dominant orthodox position (a common, but incorrect assumption). Following this assumption, the epigrapher argued that the emerging Saiva tradition appealed to non-Brahmins, because, unlike advaita, "it does not appear to have paid much attention to Sastric Karma, but...received all classes of people without any distinction of caste...[T]he non-brahmin classes eagerly took to it and at the beginning of the thirteenth century, it was apparently very influential with many centres in many places.' The discussion goes on to cite matas of the Saiva sanyasis called sivayogis or mahesvaras. As we have seen elsewhere, mahesvaras appear in South Indian institutions well before this so-called emergence of non-Brahmin religiosity.

Rajamanickam is more attentive to the historical detail of South Indian Saivism. In his discussion of Tirumular's Tirumantiram, he devotes several paragraphs to the verses, cited above, in which gifting mahesvaras is compared to gifting brahmins. The comparison may appear to suggest a non-Brahmin status for mahesvaras, but as Rajamanickam himself observes, these verses refer to Vedic Brahmins; the antipathy was not between Brahmin and non-Brahmin, but between Vedic and Agamic traditions, both of which had received patronage from South Indian rulers. In these verses, the acclaimed superiority of the mahesvara is based upon Agamic initiation, which had little to do with varna categories. By and large, issues of varna were extraneous to the logic of Agamic diksa. This material will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

MAHESVARAPUJA

Mahesvarapuja (the worship of **mahesvaras**) is the form that appears in the **Tirumantiram**; that compound continues to be current among the velala centres, and is used to refer to the feeding or gifting of Saiva ascetics or to the feeding of close, usually initiated, followers of the centre, both lay and ascetic.

The numerous temple inscriptions that describe endowments made for the feeding in matas of **mahesvaras**, **sivayogis**, **tapasvis**, **paradesis** (mendicants), and other types of ascetics and devotees thus appear to be examples of the ritual gesture which the **Tirumantiram** calls **mahesvarapuja**.[484] This act of feeding ascetics and others on both festival and ordinary occasions within the temple complex appears to have been highly significant; otherwise it would not have merited the public announcement of a temple inscription. In fact, many if not most

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[484] I use the term **mahesvarapuja** here to represent the class of acts comprising food offerings to any Saiva ascetic or Saiva devotee, though technically the term may refer only to food offerings made to recepients of Saiva initiation, both lay and ascetic. The latter usage appears to be Tirumular's usage.

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of the temple records we have that make reference to matas are concerned with this ritual gesture. In other words, it appears that matas were precisely the places where such religious acts could be carried out. Put another way, matas housed the "religious institution" of making gifts - mainly of food, but sometimes of more substantial things - to ascetics and other individuals. Highly ritualized, this gifting was both purposeful and transactional.

The statements found in the Tirumantiram coupled with the frequency of inscriptional reference to the feeding of ascetics as well as the centrality of this rite in the present-day ritual cycle of the Saiva matas suggest a formal significance to this act that may provide invaluable clues as to the mata's role in the Hindu cultural setting. To address this rite and thus the mata's place within the complex of Hindu values and traditions requires some shift of perspective away from the more usual ways of looking at not only at Hindu asceticism, but at Hindu culture in general. This shift involves the freeing of oneself from the hold of seeing Hindu culture strictly in terms of exclusive categorical oppositions (for example, pure/impure, householder/renunciate, brahmin/non-brahmin). In proposing this shift, I am following the lead of other Indianists who, working in different contexts, have begun to reformulate some of the assumptions they have brought to bear upon their data.[485]

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[485] See, for example, Frederique Marglin, "Introduction" in Purity and Auspiciousness in Indian Society (Leiden: E.J. BRill, 1985), pp. 1-9. Marglin is making an argument against a structuralist approach, which she suggests is reductionist.

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I will work my way up to that point. First, I will examine the tradition of gifting (dana) as it relates to our discussion here. After I have examined what, according to the codifiers of the tradition, gifting entailed and signified, I will compare the rite of feeding ascetics and devotees (which I will call mahesvarapuja) to other Hindu rituals which include food offerings, highlighting what I argue is the root paradigm of mahesvarapuja. I will then conclude this discussion with some observations on the way this rite can be fitted into our overall understanding of the matam as a ritual centre.

Dana as Distinct from Daksina

The act of providing for the gift of food to ascetic (and other) followers of Siva is distinct from daksina, the renumeration made to a priest at the end of a Vedic ritual to ensure its efficacy.[486] Ascetics conduct no rite whatsoever at the behest of a patron or sponsor. They neither perform nor officiate at any srauta or smarta rites[487], if indeed, they ever were qualified to undertake such rites,

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[486] Kane, HDhS, vol 5: pp. 1329-31.

[487] As evinced in the formal definition of renunciation provided by the seventeenth century Vasudeva (Vasudevasrama Yatidharmaprakasa. A Treatise on World Renunciation, critically edited, with introduction, annotated translation and appendices by Patrick Olivelle (Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 30), the sannyasin participated in no such rites:

> Renunciation is the abandonment of rites known through injunctions - the srauta and smarta, the permanent, occasional and optional -, after reciting the praisa formula [samnyastam maya, 'I have renounced'].

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for, as my data indicate, not all ascetics came from the brahmin or even even what could be considered a twice-born caste. As is demonstrated elsewhere in this thesis, ascetics, especially those attached to the Saiva velala matas, often played, and still play, key roles in ensuring that certain public rituals, mainly Agamic temple rituals, are carried out, as well as "benefitting" others by the performance of their own rites; nonetheless, the element of contract implied by the payment of daksina[488] is conspiciously absent in these instances of ritual involvement by the ascetic members of the matas. That topic has already been addressed above.

Sastric discussions on dana specify that all gifts are to be accompanied by a separate daksina,[489] presumably to render the rite of gifting effective. This injunction is followed at present at the Saiva matas when a type of mahesvarapuja is undertaken on special occasions. Any time at Tiruvavatuturai, for example, an ascetic or sannyasin who comes to the matam will be provided with food as a matter of course both as alms and as a matter of showing respect to devotees of Siva. However, on ritually significant occasions such as gurupuja (the celebration of the lineage on the anniversary of the founder's death), any wandering ascetics in the area are welcomed to the matam for a ceremonial meal. They are, in effect, invited - insofar as ascetic

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[488] Charles Malamoud, "Terminer le sacrifice" in Le Sacrifice dans l'Inde ancienne, edited by Madeleine Biardeau and Charles Malamoud (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), pp. 167-83.

[489] P.V. Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, pp. 854-5.

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mendicants can be invited[490] - to a special offering of food, prepared by the brahmin cooks in one of the mata's three kitchens. Sometime after the ascetics have been provided with food, they are gathered in the reception hall of the matam. From there they leave the matam by filing, one at a time, past the head of the institution, who presents each ascetic with a new ochre cloth and daksina of a few coins. The presentation of daksina formally ends this rite. The acceptance of the daksina, this "salary"[491] is an acknowldgement on the ascetic's part of his role in the transaction of the rite. Dana, in the form of a gift of food to ascetics, is sealed with daksina; this proviso indicates that gifting is understood to be a ritual of its own integrity, rather than subordinate to rites of greater importance. The transaction I have just described has a number of important implications. I will return to them after I complete my discussion of dana.

The Religious Value of Gifting

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[490] I asked staff members of the centres at Tiruvavatuturai and Tiruppanantal how Saiva ascetics are invited to these celebrations. They described both formal and informal procedures. Notices are sent to devastana managers of near-by Saiva temples who in turn instruct their staff to inform any ascetics who happen to come to the temple. At temples where there are matas controlled by Tiruvavatuturai, the centre's representative is faced with the responsibility of ensuring that any Saiva mendicant who happens along is informed of the events to take place at Tiruvavatuturai. I was also told that word of mouth circulates among wandering ascetics. On the question of "invitation", Helene Brunner-Lachaux's comments (Somasambhupaddhati, Troisieme partie, pp. 626f.) are informative.

[491] Charles Malamoud, "Terminer le sacrifice", pp. 175f.

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If the extent of the literature is any indicator, the subject of dana (gifts or charity) is of enormous importance to the members of the Hindu tradition. P.V. Kane[492] provides a short discussion of the extensive literature on this topic. The importance of this theme shows up not only in the Sanskrit digests, Vedic material, puranas, and other works consulted by Kane, but also in material in the indigenous languages of South India. The theme of religious charity figures prominently in Tamil sources, including the Cankam works, Tolkappiyam, Tirukkural, Nalatiyar, Piramottirakantam, and other works.[493]

Rgveda X.117[494] contains a straightforward statement praising the gift of food, the sixth verse of which is the basis of later teachings in the lawbooks. It states that the man who obtains food without the thought of sharing it with the gods and with other humans gives himself to his own destruction; he "who simply takes food alone (without giving it to others) partakes simply of sin." Here I take the sin incurred to refer to greed, as self-restraint, charity (dana), and compassion were commonly drawn together into the same category of virtuous acts. The Taittiriya Samhita Vi 1.6.3[495] compares the act of giving with tapas, the engendering of personal power through the

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[492] HDhS, vol. 4, pp. 837-88.

[493] Ganapaty Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early Tamil South India: A Study of Classical Tamil Texts", Ph.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1988, pp. 226-68, discusses the theme of gift in classic Tamil texts.

[494] HDhs, vol. 4, p. 297.

[495] HDhS, vol. 4, p. 298.

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practice of restraint. I interpret this comparison to mean that making a gift is the restraining of one's desire for what one is giving up.

There are other interpretations of the Hindu understanding of gifting, such as the one suggested by Heesterman[496] which sees gifting as a transaction in "evil and impurity". Strongly influenced by Mauss' theory of the gift as a link established "between donor and donee that is too strong for both of them,"[497] Heesterman bases his argument on certain Vedic passages[498] which caution that a gift (daksina) offered to a brahmin by a patron (yajamana) is charged with the patron's "impure self".[499] He also cites other material which suggests the brahmin's reluctance to become involved in the world of exchange. This view of the gift as dangerous to accept because it compromises the brahmin's independence and possibly his purity does appear in various sources, but it is not the only way gifting was understood by Hindu commentators. If it were, the institution of brahmadeya, the system of land endowment to

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[496] J. C. Heesterman, "Brahmin, Ritual, and the Renouncer" in The Inner Conflict of Tradition. Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985). See also Gloria Goodwin Raheja, The Poison in the Gift: Ritual Prestation and the Dominant Caste in a North Indian Village (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988).

[497] Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le Don" Sociologie et Anthropologie (Paris 1950), p. 248f, cited in Heesterman, p. 37.

[498] Among the texts Heesterman draws on are the Kathaka Samhita, Taittiriya Samhita, Apastamba Srautasutra, and the Maitrayani Samhita.

[499] Heesterman, p. 27.

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brahmins, would never have had the vitality it did in South India.[500] Certainly dharmasastric literature makes an attempt to reconcile concerns for purity with the value placed on gifting. One legal commentator[501] cites, among other prohibitions resulting from impurity (asauca), the loss of the privilege to make religious gifts. Another text, the Yajnavalkya-smrti,[502] includes both the continuous distribution of food at a charity house and the daily gifting of a cow, gold, or other acceptable gift in a listing of religious activities exempt from ordinary pollution constraints. In a similar fashion, the same sort of exemption is applied to a king in his capacity as sovereign.[503]

Heesterman's work recovers one attitude towards gifting, involved with issues of ritual status and hierarchical position and from the perspective of a recipient. However, the tradition acknowledges other ways of looking at gifting, and in that peculiar Hindu way of

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[500] Burton Stein, "All the Kings' Mana" in All the Kings' Mana (Madras: New Era Publications, 1984), pp. 29-30 and 42f., discusses kingly prestation (dana) by the Colas as a means of achieving incorporation in kingly polity. His argument is more fully developed in Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980). His work is not without its detractors, but here is not the place to examine Stein's argument. My focus differs from Stein's in that I am concerned with one example of prestation, mahesvarapuja, and its paradigmatic roots, rather than the integrative or other effects of such prestation.

[501] Haradatta's commentary on Gautamadharmasutra, 14.1, cited in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 268.

[502] Yajnavalkya-smrti, III.28-29, cited in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 297.

[503] Manavadharmasastra V.94; Gautamadharmasastra 14.43-44; and others, cited in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 297f.

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holding multiple points of view at once, considers them equally valid, though contextual. From one of these other perspectives, the interdependence symbolized by a gift transaction in the form of a brahmadeya settlement endowed by a king, was highly desirable. Another understanding, one that identifies gifting with certain attributes that have almost magical powers, addresses the royal institution of gifting found in the matas. This understanding sees gifting in the context of sacrifice, and moreover sees both as having creative potential.

Gifting and Sacrifice

The appearance of the term istapurta in Vedic material suggests that charitable activity was given an equal status to offerings made in sacrifice. Though employed in the singular, the word, probably a samahara-dvandva compound, consists of two parts, ista, what is sacrificed and purta, what is filled, which together refer to the cumulative merit resulting from the performances of sacrifices and charitable acts.[504] This definition is suggested by the way the term is used in the Taittiriya Samhita v.7.7.1-3:[505] "when he comes by the devayana paths, then make his istapurta manifest to him; whatever sacrifice was offered, whatever was handed over, whatever was given and the daksina offered, may Agni, present in all actions, place all that in heaven among the gods for us."

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[504] P.V. Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, pp. 843-4.

[505] Cited in ibid.

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In his voluminous Aparaka-Yajnavalkiya-Dharmasastranibhanda, the twelfth century Aparaka quotes the Mahabharata for a definition of ista and purta:

> Whatever is offered in the single fire,...the three srauta fires, and the gifts made inside the vedi (in srauta sacrifices) are called ista, while dedication of deep wells, oblong large wells and tanks, temples, distribution of food, and the maintaining of public gardens - these are called purta.[506]

Other works cited by Aparaka repeat this definition of purta: "the dedication of tanks, wells, temples, places for distribution of food and gardens is called purta and also gifts made at the time of eclipses, or on the sun's passage in a zodiacal sign or on the 12th day of a month."[507]

The conceptual closeness between the idea of gift and that of sacrifice is evinced by medieval legal commentaries which discuss yaga, homa, and dana collectively in order to differentiate among them. Accordingly, yaga constitutes the abandoning of something to a deity through Vedic mantra; homa, the abandoning ownership of something intended for a deity by offering it into the fire; and dana, the cessation of one's ownership over something and the creation of another's ownership over it through that person's acceptance.[508] Tyaga,

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[506] HDhS, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 844.

[507] ibid.

[508] HDhS, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 841.

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renunciation, here the abandoning of ownership,[509] is the shared characteristic value which animates each of these three different types of ritual actions. As well, each of these separate acts actuates and actualizes tyaga, though they are distinguished from each other by method and destignatee. By grouping together and categorizing rites that appear quite dissimilar (such as a Vedic fire sacrifice and a king's endowment for a public charity), the commentators are bringing to the surface what they take to be a core meaning of ritual activity.

The meaning of that ritual relates in part to the ability to transcend the self, as indicated by the ability to give up what one has. These sastric discussions, as well as passages such as Manu IV.226-227, which prescribes "danadharma (the mode of dharma consisting in dana) which is either ista or purta",[510] suggest that the codifiers of the tradition, especially the medieval commentators, saw the concept of dana (gift, but also self-abnegation) as encompassing sacrifice and other ritual activity.[511] Associated with the domain of the king, this

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[509] Interestingly enough, the term tyaga appears in a Pallava inscription (T.N. Subramanian, "Pallankovil Jaina Copper-plate Grant of Early Pallava Period" in Transaction of the Archaeological Society of South India, 1958-9, Madras: 1959. pp. 81f.) which praises the truthfulness, tyaga, modesty, and valor of the ruler. Stein ("All the Kings' Mana", p. 43) renders this term as "asceticism"; T.N. Subramanian renders it as "sacrifice".

[510] HDhS, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 844.

[511] Nicholas Dirks "Political Authority and Structural Change in Early South Indian History, The Indian Economic and Social History Review, v. 13, discusses early and later Pallava records and suggests that the claim to royal authority in later records is based on kingly maintenance of dharma and royal prestation (dana), whereas earlier records emphasize royal sacrifice, genealogy, and military prowess. His observations may well support the idea of Buddhist and Jain influences

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activity and the form of transcendence it encodes was not directed towards release; its goal was not a denial of life, but rather a network of sustaining involvement closely tied to the maintenance of worldly prosperity.

Mahesvarapuja as a Form of Sraddha

It is readily apparent how certain forms of dana - the construction of wells (with their life-giving waters) and even endowments to temples - contribute to worldly prosperity. For the gift of food to ascetics, however, the series of identifications and equations which draws that example of dana into the domain of auspiciousness is more complex. In other words, as a rite, mahesvarapuja involves more than is initially apparent; it is more than an elaborated or formalized instance of alms-giving. In ritual manuals dealing with asceticism, distinction is drawn between food received as alms and formalized food offerings,[512] with the latter looked upon

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on the gifting patterns that show up in the South Indian matas. S.J. Tambiah, Buddhism and Spirit Cults of North-East Thailand (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), p. 213, has suggested that a gift (dana) to the Buddhist order is an example of non-reciprocal giving, and thus "doctrinally a sacrifice." Taking his cues from Levi-Strauss, Ivan Strenski, "On Generalized Exchange and the Domestication of the Sangha", Man (New Series), vol. 18 (1983), pp. 475, argues that dana is a type of generalized exchange, which establishes "moral credit", rather than an example of restricted exchange, which demands reciprocity. My argument, which follows, suggests the full transition to generalized exchange is not yet complete in the act of mahesvarapuja.

512 Vasudevasrama Yatidharmaprakasa. A Treatise on World Renunciation. Critically Edited with Introduction, Annotated Translation and Appendices by Patrick Olivelle, Part Two: Translation,

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disparagingly for reasons that are often left inarticulated in these texts.[513] These reasons may very well pertain to what associations such offerings have. I argue that the root paradigm of mahesvarapuja is the sraddha rite and that when the relationship between it and sraddha is elucidated, the rationale behind endowments for such food offerings becomes clearer.

Formal food offerings to worthy persons, usually brahmins, are the central feature of the sraddha rites that touch the life of every caste Hindu. These rites consist of offerings made to nourish the

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discusses acceptable food for sannyasis (54 and 55). Acceptable begged food is of five types which includes food gathered at several houses, foods offered before a renouncer begins rounds, food offered spontaneously, and cooked food brought to the matha by devout people (54:1-20). Improper food includes a meal offered by one person. The text cites an unidentified smrti: "Let a renouncer collect the madhukara [begged] type of food even from the house of a barbarian. However he should not eat a full meal from one individual, not even from one equal to Brhaspati." (55:4-5) Food offered by one person is known as ekanna, a technical term for a full meal offered to a renouncer by a householder, either by special invitation or in conjunction with a religious ceremony (4:31-32n). Olivelle notes (ibid.) that among orthodox renouncers, only a Kuticaka is allowed to accept such a meal. From listings given of types of renunciates (4:1-113), the Kuticaka, though possessed with intense (as contrasted with "extremely intense") detachment, is the furthest from release, or the lowest on the scale of detachment (4:113).

[513] Ekanna (a formalized food offering by one individual) appears in a list including other types of food considered polluting, such as meat and food contaminated with ordure (55:8-10). The discussion then goes on to caution against accepting food from a house where a person has died until after a rite known as the sapindana has been performed. Why a formalized feeding should be considered polluting is likely due to the association with sraddha. This is the point I argue over the next several pages.

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family's manes (pitarah). There are many kinds of sraddhas,[514] most of which can be subsumed under the general categories of parvana and ekoddista. In a parvana sraddha, performed on certain specified days such as the new moon day, the three deceased paternal ancestors of the performer are invoked. Secondary invocations may include the three deceased paternal ancestors of the performer's mother. The ekoddista sraddha, as its name indicates, is performed for the benefit of a single person. It involves a series of sixteen rites that begin shortly after a person's death and continue through the following twelve months.[515] These rites culminate at the end of that year in the sapindana or sapindikarana, which marks the deceased's entry into the realm of the pitrs.[516] Up to this point, the deceased's spirit is understood to be in the realm of the pretas or ghosts.[517] Its installation as a mane (pitr) would not be possible without the attentions of the ekoddista rites.

An early reference to sraddha, appearing in

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[514] HDhS, vol. 4, pp. 516ff. See also D.R. Shastri, Origin and Development of the Rituals of Ancestor Worship in India (Calcutta: Bookland, 1963), pp. 125-129.

[515] D.R.Shastri, pp. 130-132.

[516] P.V. Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, pp. 516f. In its modern form the sapindana generally takes place twelve days after cremation, that is, at the end of a symbolic year. See David Knipe, "Sapindikarana: The Hindu Rite of Entry into Heaven" in Religious Encounters with Death: Insights from the History and Anthropology of Religions, edited by F. Reynolds and E.H. Waugh (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977, p. 118.

[517] P.V. Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, pp. 339-40, 518f. See also R.B. Pandey, Hindu Samskaras (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969), pp. 265-67.

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Apastamba-dharmasutra, draws the connection linking forms of sacrifice, deities, ancestors, and food offerings to brahmins:

> Formerly men and gods lived together in this world. The gods went to heaven owing to sacrifices [that they performed], but men remained behind. Those among men who performed sacrifices in the same way as the gods did, dwell in the other world [i.e., heaven] with the gods and Brahman. Then Manu promulgated the rite which is designated by the word sraddha and which tends to the salvation (or happiness) of mankind. In this rite the manes (pitarah) are the deities, but the brahmanes [to whom the food is served] are in the place of the ahavaniya fire [in which in sacrifices to gods oblations are offered].[518]

On the basis of the last sutra, medieval legal commentators[519] held that feeding brahmins is the principal act at a sraddha. The Kalpataru speaks of sraddha as "the giving up of sacrificial material intending it for the pitrs and its acceptance by brahmanas."[520] The purpose of the rite was to sustain the lineage, both past and present; the pitrs themselves gratified by the offerings bestowed on men long life, progeny, wealth, learning, heaven, all happiness, sovereignty, and even moksa.[521] The same idea appears in the Satapatha Brahmana, which declares that hunger will no longer befall the man who gives food even once to a proper brahmana, who is a performer of sacred rites, who has

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[518] Apastamba-dharmasutra II.7.16 1-3, cited in P.V. Kane, HDhS, p. 349.

[519] Haradatta on Apastamba Dharmasutra, cited in HDhS, ibid.

[520] HDhS, vol. 4, p. 334.

[521] Matsya purana 19.11-12; Agnipurana 163. 41-2, cited in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 335.

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studied the Veda, who is old in learning, and devoted to austerities.[522] Whatever deity he may wish to satiate at any sacrifice, by destining the offering to that deity in his mind, he shall give the food to a person like that. The Mitaksara on Yajnavalkyasmrti offers a formal definition of sraddha that echoes its discussions of dana: "abandonment with faith of an article of food or some substance thereof, intending it for the benefit of the departed."[523] Again the context is sacrifice.[524]

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[522] HDhS, vol. 2, pp. 135.

[523] The Mitaksara on Yajnavalkyasmrti I.217, cited in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 334.

[524] There is, of course, another rite in which food is offered to a particular group of people, namely the food transaction which marks the end of ritual pollution after death. Here, the recipient group is untouchable and at first glance, the rite seems to be concerned more with pollution than anything else. The rite in which Untouchables are fed occurs shortly after an individual's death. The standard ethnographic analysis sees this transaction as an example of the rules of purity and pollution in operation. Death pollution (what Heesterman calls "evil and impurity") is transferred in food cooked by members of the deceased's family to the Untouchables, who themselves embody the impure. As part of the funerary rite, this transfer marks the end of the period of death pollution and returns the deceased's kin group to its ordinary, innate level of purity.

Notwithstanding the importance of these ideas of pollution, this food transaction falls under the purview of a sraddha rite. Discussions of sraddha in works such as the Garudapurana and Padmapurana describe the sixteen sraddhas that must be undertaken for the deceased person's spirit to make the passage from the realm of the ghosts (preta and pisaca) to the realm of the manes (pitarah). Though there is some divergence of views as to exactly when each of the sixteen sraddhas are to be performed, the listings inevitably include times within days of a person's death and then monthly for a period of a year (HDhS, vol. 4, p. 518f.). Yet, while these sraddhas were prescribed, certain smrtis decreed that the learned brahmanas should not partake of sraddha food for the first three years after the sapindana, which marked the last of the sixteen rites. Accordingly, by dining at a sraddha within a year of a person's death, one ate of the deceased's bones and marrow; within two years, one ate of the flesh (ibid.). Likewise, the Varahapurana (189.12-13 in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 388) provides that if a brahmana dies while the food offered to a preta is still is his stomach, he dwells for

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While brahmanas are commonly mentioned as the appropriate recipients of the sraddha offerings (with a great deal of argument and disgreement over what type of brahmana - vedaparaga, vahvrca, adhvaryu, candoga, etc. - was the superior guest), in certain sources, the ascetic - yati, yogi, or sannyasi - replaces the brahmana as the most fitting guest.[525] The Visnu Dharmasastra sees yogins are particularly panktipavana (qualified for sitting in rows) and quotes a verse purportedly recited by the pitrs: "May (a descendant) be born in our

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an eon in a horrible hell.

To use the ritual paradigm of death offerings, the food given to Untouchables at the end of the pollution period is a sraddha, celebrated shortly after death when the deceased is still in the realm of the pretas. Either untouchables stand in as recepients of this offering, or the mahapatras, the defiled funerary priests, as no high-minded brahmana would wish to be identified with pretas and piscacas. See David Knipe, "Sapindakarana", p. 112, and Jonathan Parry, "Ghosts, Greed, and Sin" in Man (New Series), vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 88-111, for a discussion of the role of mahapatras. While minimized, the association of death pollution with a sraddha ceremony is never completely forgotten. As Kane noted in the earlier part of this century, even in his time very learned brahmins were unwilling to be fed at a sraddha, particularly within a few years of the death of the person for whose benefit the ceremony is performed. Purification rites are prescribed for the recepients of a sraddha dinner, even an auspicious one (vrddhisraddha), though the extent of the purification prescribed diminishes with the passage of time. The further away one is from the death, the less rigorous the purification. There is some indication that the danger of pollution is present at a sraddha only while transition from peta to pitr is still in process.

525 The puranas make up the bulk of sources recommending ascetics be fed at a sraddha. See HDhS, vol. 4, pp. 388-89 and D. Sastri, "Origin and Development", pp. 205-210. Helene Brunner-Lachaux, Somasambhu, Troisieme partie, p. 626, n.13, cites a gloss by Trilocana which states that ascetics (tapasvin) who had received Saiva initiation, along with members of the four classes, beginning with brahmanas, were appropriate guests at a sraddha. Somasambhu (Sraddhavidhi, 3b-4a, p. 626) regards initiated ascetics (tapasvin) as the preferred representatives to incarnate the ancestors. There is, however, disagreement between Trilocana and Somasambhu as to appropriate levels of initiation.

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family who feeds a brahmana yogin at a sraddha by which we are ourselves satisfied."[526] According to the Vridha Satatapa,[527] whenever any occasion for feeding brahmanas arises, preference should always be given to a yogin. A performer of the sraddha rite does not obtain the merit of his action if he feeds a householder by superceding a yogin. As a result of his action, his fathers are degraded from heaven. The Padmapurana declares that in a sraddha rite, a yogin is superior to ten thousand brahmanas well versed in the Vedas, pure in birth and conduct.[528]

According to the Chagaleya, a yati should be fed in a sraddha as he belongs to the best order of life and is superior to all in knowledge and meditation.[529] Likewise, the Vayupurana recommends that a yati be served prior to all kinds of brahmanas. According to the Nagara-khanda, a yati should be served first, then a snataka or a vanaprasthin, next the trikarmis or those who practice yajna, adhyapana and dana. If all these are unavailable, then a householder should be invited.[530] In a similar vein, the Brahmavaivarta Purana ranks invitees. Preference should always be given to the yatis, but if they are not available, then vanaprasthas should be fed.[531] The purana goes on to enumerate, in

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[526] Visnu Dharmasastra, 83.19-20, cited in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 388.

[527] Daksinaranjan Sastri, Origin and Development, p. 205.

[528] Ibid.

[529] Ibid.

[530] Ibid., p. 209.

[531] Ibid., p. 206.

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decreasing preference, naisthika brahmacarins who are versed in the Vedas and brahmin householders who are yogins knowing brahman, brahmin householders who know the meaning of the Veda, and finally those who (only) recite the Vedas. The lists do not always correspond, but beyond the differences in ranking yogic and ascetic typologies, a point is repeatedly made: yogins and yatis are preferred guests at such feedings.

But why? Why yatis, yogins, why ascetics? The conventional response to that question goes to the effect that the ascetic (or sannyasin as this is the type of ascetic one usually has in mind) is the representative par excellence of the conquest of death. Here the response appeals to the topsy-turvy world of the ascetic, who, in Heesterman's words, "having emancipated himself from the world the renouncer can from his sphere of independence reenter into relations with the world, where he now enjoys unequalled prestige."[532] This understanding of asceticism, found in all introductory texts on the Hindu tradition, equates the sannyasin with the goal of moksa, release from the cycle of birth and death and through enough repetition has become formulaic. Hence C.J. Fuller can dismiss the "problem of the numerous ascetic monks who...take on sacerdotal roles in temples" with the explanation, "monks plainly have renounced the world so that they can re-enter it without compromising their status."[533] But the tradition has other ways of seeing ascetics and offers other responses.

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[532] Heesterman, p. 43.

[533] C.J. Fuller, Servants of the Goddess. The Priests of a South Indian Temple (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 65.

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The puranas and other texts that extol the virtue of inviting ascetics to a sraddha collapse together various explanations, stating that yatis are superior in knowledge and meditations,[534] they possess the knowledge of the twenty-five subtle principles.[535] An explanation provided by Brahmavaivartapurana[536] reflects the primitive strands of ayurvedic thought. According to this text, yogins practice yoga with agnihotra and such other sacrifices enjoined for the castes and orders of life and with devotions to their gurus. With the merits of their yoga they please their fathers, grandfathers, and the divine pitrs like Agnisvatta. These pitrs being gratified, gratify the moon, and the moon being gratified infuses life into the universe.[537] Therefore the entire universe is enlivened by the yogins. Yoga is the strength of the pitrs. The moon moves through yoga and therefore a preference should be given to feeding a yogin in a sraddha rite. Beyond these explanations, and in part perhaps informing them, is another one which sees renunciates in quite a startling light: not beyond the world and its cycles of life and death, but still intimately connected, albeit in quite a different form, to these processes.

To uncover this view, we have to return again to the rite of sraddha. In a manner inconsistent with the notion of renunciation as a

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534 D. Shastri, Origin and Development, p. 209, citing Chagaleya.

535 Ibid, p. 205, citing the Brahmavaivartapurana. The twenty-five principles refer to the tattvas of the Samkyha system.

536 Ibid., p. 205.

537 The Brahmavaivartapurana presents a primitive explanation of the cycle of life-maintenance that also appears in the Caraka Samhita.

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forsaking of worldly ties, texts on renunciation, such as Vasudevasrama's Yatidharmaprakasa, enjoin that a son undertake sraddha for a father even if that father be a renunciate. However, the sraddha prescribed is the annual sraddha, the parvana sraddha, the ceremony offered to the manes (pitrs). In fact, the earlier ceremonies of ekoddista (offered on behalf of a person on as early as the eleventh day after cremation) and sapindikarana (performed on the first anniversary of death) are not to be undertaken for a renunciate:

> In the case of renouncers one should never perform the ekoddista-sraddha. On the eleventh day (after death), however, the parvana-sraddha is ordained.
>
> Their sapindikarana should not be performed by their sons, etc.; the mere carrying of the triple staff totally abolishes the ghostly state [preta].[538]

Recalling that the ekoddista and sapindikarana ceremonies mark -- and perhaps precipitate -- the deceased's transition from the ghostly state (preta) to that of the "fathers" (pitrs), their omission presents us with an extraordinary view of renunciates. In Patrick Olivelle's words, renouncers of all descriptions "are considered manes immediately after death"![539] The renunciate may be dead to the world, but he is as

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[538] Yatidharmaprakasa, 71.13-16, citing Usanah-smrti. Sivagrayogin's Saivasannyasapaddhati, pp. 154-57 prescribes that saivasannyasis perform their own sapindakarana sraddha prior to receipt of the Saiva initiations.

[539] Yatidharmaprakasa, p.67, n.80. Olivelle maintains that renouncers of all descriptions are looked upon in this way. See also HDhS, vol. 2, p. 965.

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much involved with its maintenance as are the propitiated ancestors. To provide food to an ascetic is to nourish the manes, symbolically as well as literally, if this view of renunciates is to be taken seriously. That it was and that ascetics regularly enjoyed this recognition is hinted at in the admonishment cited by Vasudevasrama in his Yatidharmaprakasa, "a renouncer who regularly eats at a sraddha soon falls to the level of a sudra. After seeing such a wretch, one should enter the water with one's clothes on."[540]

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[540] Yatidharmaprakasa, 55.66-7 (p. 162), citing Apastambadharmasutram.

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Śraddhas as Auspicious Events at Auspicious Places

There is, I argue, more than just a casual resemblance between the rites of śraddha and the provision for the feeding of ascetics and others on certain occasions in matas located on temple sites. I maintain that the purpose the matam served, namely to locate formal food offerings at sacred sites, as an expression of the śraddha rite, was intended for the same ends -- progeny, prosperity, goodness -- as the feeding of the ancestors, except that the benefits of the offerings were more generalized. Discussions of śraddha allow for just such a category of rites. Śraddhas were performed not only on set days as part of a family's required ritual cycle, but they were also undertaken to celebrate and mark certain occasions of auspiciousness. There is a class of ceremonies variously known as abhyudayikaśraddha or vṛddhiśraddha or nandimukhaśraddha[541] that were performed to mark happy and prosperous occasions: for lucky events such as the birth of a son, upananyana, and marriage, or for the commencement of a charitable act (purta) such as the dedication of a well or tank.

Different from the monthly rites (parvana-śraddha) in that the number of individuals fed was to be even and the direction of offerings reversed, these auspicious rites invoked the joyous manes, the nandimukhas (those with their faces turned upwards), who were the remote

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[541] P.V. Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, pp. 521-28, D. Shastri, Origin and Development, pp. 236-41.

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pitarah, the fourth, fifth and sixth degrees of upward generations.[542] In these occasions, the recipients assembled were honoured and requested to declare the day an auspicious one.[543] Included in a list given in the Matsyapurana of the proper occasions for an auspicious sraddha are the enshrining of images of deities, the completion of vows, acts of purta such as the consecration of wells and tanks, and the undertaking of pilgrimages. These vrddhisraddhas were done when occasion warranted, and as such were naimittika rites.[544] When their performance corresponded with a solar or lunar eclipse, solstice or equinoctial day, a sankranti (a time of the sun's passage from one sign of the zodiac to another), and other similar extraordinary or transitional periods, the manes were infinitely pleased; undertaken at those times, the rites were also kamya, done to incur particular rewards such as heaven or progeny.[545]

Though the texts are not specific as to where auspicious sraddhas were to be performed, some, especially those offered during a pilgrimage,[546] were completed at temple sites. Lists of proper places for sraddhas inevitably included tirthas, for it was believed that the

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[542] D. Shastri, p. 181.

[543] Patrick Olivelle, Vasudevasrama Yatidharmaprakasa, 15.16n, p. 94.

[544] See classification in P.V. Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, p. 369f.

[545] Visnudharmasutra 77.1-7; Kurmapurana, Uttarardha, 16.6-3, cited in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 372. See also D. Shastri, Origin and Development, pp. 147-8.

[546] P.V. Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, p. 616. The very act of declaring intent (sankalpa) to undertake a pilgrimage was to be made with a sraddha offering. See p. 583.

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manes were always present in sacred places.[547] The Kurmapurana states that holy sites and temples, among other places, have no definite owner and cannot be private property, alluding to the injunction that the efficacy of the rite is vitiated if one offers sraddha in spots belonging to others.[548] Further, while Manu requires strict examination of the ancestry and learning of brahmanas to be invited to a sraddha, some of the puranas observe that such scrutiny was not necessary at holy places.[549] This view is endorsed in several digests.[550]

Certainly food offerings were done on a regular basis at temple sites. A sample of inscriptions from Tiruvorriyur indicate that both kings and their officials undertook to make such offerings. During the reign of a Cola king identified as Maduraikonda Parakesarivarman, an Iladaipperaraiyan alias Solasikhamarai Pallavaraiyan provided a gift of gold for the feeding of two mahavratas every day.[551] Kulottunga Cola himself also made a similar offering. In the 49th year of his reign he gave a piece of land as an endowment for feeding fifty devotees in the

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[547] Ibid., Kane cites from several digests which quote a verse from the Devipurana to the effect that sraddha should be performed at tirthas, but there is no offering of arghya and no avahana (since pitrs are deemed to be always present at tirthas, as the Kasikhanda says).

[548] Kurmapurana, II.22.17, cited in HDhS, vol. 4, p. 377.

[549] Manu III.149. The puranas include Padmapurana V.29.212, Devipurana, Skandapurana (Kasikandha 6.56-57), and others. See P.V. Kane, HDhS, vol. 4, p. 578f.

[550] Kalpataru on tirtha (p.10), Tirthacintamani of Vacaspati (p.10), and the Tirthaprakasa (p.73), cited in HDhS, p. 579.

[551] A.R.E. no. 168 of 1912-13.

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Kulottunkacola matam, a place presumably named after himself.[552] The inscription records that Kulottunga made this endowment while at the palace at Gangaikondacolapuram.

Evidence from other temple sites likewise indicates regular gifts for feeding brahmanas, ascetics, and devotees. At a temple in Kumbhakonam, for example, it is recorded that an Arayan Kalangamalia, a velala from Tanjavur, purchased land from the assembly of Tirukkudamukkai for the feeding of sivayogis in the temple of Tirukkulkottattu Parasvami.[553] In the same year, Sri Kudandai Koyilmayilai alias Parantaka Muvendavelan of Sirringai purchased land to feed twenty apurvis versed in the Vedas and five Sivayogins in the temple.[554] In the following year he made a gift of land for feeding fifty brahmanas.[555] At Sayavanam, it is recorded[556] that the minister of the king, Mukundayaradipati Tirucirrampalam, built a matam in Kaverippumpattinam and presented land to it for the feeding of fifty brahmanas of Sayavanam. Kaverippumpattinam is some distance from Sayavanam, so apparently fifty brahmanas of Sayavanam were invited to attend the feeding. These epigraphs are but a few examples of a common

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[552] A.R.E. no. 200 of 1912-13.

[553] A.R.E. no. 228 of 1911-12.

[554] A.R.E. no. 230 of 1911-12.

[555] A.R.E. no 231 of 1911-12.

[556] A.R.E. no. 269 of 1911-12.

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type of endowment. Many more could be cited.[557] Medieval Saiva literature also speaks of similar ritual gestures.

I will cite an example from the Periyapuranam[558] in which Cekkilar embellishes the story of Naracinkamunaiyaraiyan, Cuntaramurti's patron, with reference to the ruler's honouring of Saiva ascetics. Naracinkamunaiyaraiyan, a feudatory of the Pallava king Narasimhavarman II, was the ruler of Tirumunaipatu, the area where Cuntaramurti was born. Cuntaramurti in his Tiruttontattokai[559] calls himself the servant of the true servant of the lord, a reference to Naracinkamunaiyaraiyan's devotion to Siva. The late eleventh century Nampiyantar Nampi, in his Tiruttontar tiruvantati, recounts the relationship Cuntaramurti had with the king. According to Nampiyantar Nampi, the king, being of the habit of giving gold coins to Saiva tapsvis, once gave double the amount of gold to one who saw the feminine form everywhere. This reference suggests the tapasvin was a follower of the vamamarga. In the Naracinkamunaiyaraiyar puranam of the Periyapuranam,[560] the twelfth century Cekkilar expands on Nampiyantar

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[557] A.R.E. no. 101 of 1914; A.R.E. nos. 124, 225, & 230 of 1911; A.R.E. no. 687 of 1909; A.R.E. nos. 467, 164, & 177 of 1908; A.R.E. no. 99 of 1926; A.R.E. no. 2 of 1914; A.R.E. no. 677 of 1919; A.R.E. nos. 164 &177 of 1908; A.R.E. no. 168 of 1912; A.R.E. no. 100 of 1906; A.R.E. no. 189 of 1928-29; A.R.E. no. 311 of 1928; A.R.E. no. 144 of 1926; A.R.E. 1931, no. 82; A.R.E. 1935-36, no. 148; A.R.E. no. 149 of 1927; A.R.E. no. 422 OF 1904.

[558] Periyapuranam, "Naracinkamunaiyaraiyanayanar Puranam", pp. 394-96.

[559] Tevaram 39.

[560] Periyapuranam, "Naracinkamunaiyaraiyanayanar Puranam", pp. 394-96.

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Nampi's account:

> The saint was the ruler of Tirumunaippatinatu. He always wore in his mind the greatness of the sacred ashes. On the Atirai day he would honour Saivites, feed them and give them one hundred gold coins each. One Atirai day, a pronounced libertine expressing lust in every act, came besmeared with the sacred ashes. While others slighted him, Naracinkamunaiyaraiyan, because of the sacred ashes he wore, welcomed him with all humility and gave him twice the gold he usually gave.[561]

Cuntaramurti's earlier reference to Naracinkamunaiyaraiyan only makes mention of his devotion; the later accounts illustrate this devotion with examples of the ruler's feeding and gifting to the tapasvin, acts that were in vogue at the time of Nampi Antar Nampi's and Cekkilar's compositions. The reference to the tapasvin as a lusty character who saw the feminine form everywhere, is interesting, as it suggests changes from the earlier Pallava period to the medieval period in the character and nature of Saiva ascetics who received royal patronage. AS I have noted above, there is evidence in the earlier centuries of Kapalika and Kalamukha presence at Tamil temple sites, but by Cekkilar's time, most of the Saiva ascetics were of lineages that admitted no direct association with the earlier Tantric traditions.[562]

This example from the Periyapuranam and the inscriptions I have cited offer in themselves no conclusive proof that the ritual gesture of

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[561] Naracinkamunaiyaraiyan Periyapuranam, v. 5.

[562] The later Saivas appear to have sanitized their tradition. See the discussion in Chapter Four. On the same theme of sanitization, Sanjukta Gupta, "The Changing Pattern of Pancaratra Ritual", pp. 67-91, discusses how the older Tantric elements of the Pancaratra tradition were suppressed as Pancaratra became oriented to public worship in temples.

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feeding a number of brahmanas, ascetics, or others is related to the sraddha rite. The epigraphs make no allusions to sraddha, nor do they relate the recipients of the offerings to pitarah or any other such beings, nor, in fact, would I argue that these offerings are truncated versions of sraddhas plain and simple. Rather, I suggest that their root paradigm lies in the sraddha rite, or that the act gains its significance from the sraddha paradigm. To conclude this argument, I will examine the epigraphical references to matas at Tiruvavatuturai, nearly all of which contain records of food offerings, and then I will turn to a rite which illustrates what the epigraphical material alludes to.

Epigraphical Records of Earlier Matas at Tiruvavatuturai

Thirteen of the sixty-two inscriptions copied off the temple in Tiruvavatuturai in 1925 refer to matas, feeding halls, or food offerings. Burton Stein refers to some of these inscriptions in his discussion of changes in the economic and political management of the agrarian order of the late Cola period and its concomitant cultural developments.[563] He suggests that the records from Tiruvavatuturai and other places, many of which mention matas, show evidence of a reform movement led by non-Brahmins that had popular support that offered some

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563 Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, pp. 229-41.

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challenge to existing Brahmanical institutions.[564] A closer look at the inscriptions from Tiruvavatuturai that mention matas and feeding houses throws some of Stein's assumptions into question.

One of the inscriptions comes from the time of Rajendracola[565] and mentions daily feeding of mahesvaras in a matam named after the king's guru. This inscription has already been discussed in the chapter on Tirumalikaittevar. Another[566] dated to the Cola king identified only as Parakesarivarman who took Madurai, registers a gift of land to the temple from a certain individual for the maintenance of various ritual specialists and temple employees, for offerings in the temple, and for feeding, under the supervision of the donor's descendents, sivayogis and mahesvaras on seven festival days beginning with the Mula asterism. In what capacity, if any, the sivayogis and mahesvaras served the temple is unclear from this inscription, nor, apparently, is it important for the purpose of this endowment. Instead, the provision to feed them on certain festival days is a way of sealing, or finalizing, the endowment that contributed to the maintenance of temple rites. Supervised by the donor's descendants, this feeding ensures the continual recouping of the merit of the act of dana.

The rest of the inscriptions referring to matas or feeding houses come from the time of Kulottunga or his successor Vikramacola. A

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[564] Ibid., pp. 230-35.

[565] A.R.E. no. 103 of 1925.

[566] A.R.E. no. 111 of 1925.

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couple are only fragments; several[567] record donations by certain individuals for feeding houses (araccalai)[568] and for feeding tapasvi and/or devotees in matas with names such as Tirunilavitankan (a name of Siva),[569] Tiruviti ("sacred way" i.e., liberation)[570] and Pramanavacakan, again a holy name.[571] The last inscription specifies that the devotees be fed on ordinary days and on amavacai, or new moon days, a compulsory time for sraddha.[572]

The bulk of the remaining inscriptions mentioning matas or provisions for feedings announce endowments all made by one individual. He is variously identified as the senapati Sankaran Sivalokanayakan alias Gangaikontacola-Antapalar,[573] Rajadhirajan alias Rajendracola-Antapalar,[574] and Sankaran Ilankarikutiutaiyan Ampalankoyilkontan alias Antapalan.[575] The titles reflect dual loyalty: as Gangaikontacola and Rajadhirajan alias Rajendracola Anantapalar, he demonstrates some degree of allegiance to Cola reign, perhaps as a locality authority. As Sankaran Sivalokanayakan and Ampalakoyilkontan,

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[567] A.R.E. nos. 144, 145, 147 & 155 of 1925.

[568] no. 145.

[569] no. 144.

[570] no. 147.

[571] no. 155.

[572] Dakshinaranjan Shastri, Origin and Development, p. 135.

[573] no. 148.

[574] no. 152.

[575] no. 158.

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he shows himself to be no uncertain devotee of Siva. Anantapalan apparently had staked out some reputation for himself, as verses in the panegyric Vikramacola-ula[576] note that his charitable activity was celebrated from Kanyakumari to the Ganges. Of the endowments he made, two[577] went for feeding devotees on different festival days in a matam which bore the same name as one of his titles, Sivalokanayakan-matam. In the course of several years, he also helped fund a dancing hall in the temple,[578] build a mantapa ,[579] and maintain another hall, called the Munnurrirupattunalvan for feeding brahmanas, tapasvis and the destitute,[580] and another (?) matam[581] to feed brahmanas, tapasvis, anadigirisas (a group the meaning of whose name is unclear to us), and those studying medicine, grammar, and other subjects. The last place may have been the same Munnurrirupattunalvan feeding hall. The tapasvis and devotees to be fed in these endowments may have been ascetic proponents and lay followers of the same Saiva teachings (sampradaya) Anantapalan followed, or perhaps was initiated into. If so, his endowments were not only acts of dana, but they also served to support the santana, the teaching lineage, to which he belonged. Or, the tapasvis, devotees, brahmanas, students, and destitute may simply have

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576 Nilakantha Sastri, Colas, p. 347.

577 nos. 148 & 149.

578 no. 152.

579 no. 153.

580 no. 158.

581 no. 159.

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been people whom it was conventional to feed in such a manner.

There is one other early reference[582] to a matam at Tiruvavatuturai. This one records the endowment of a woman to support the maintenance of a matam called the Narpattennayiravan-matam, the matam of the 48,000. Narpattennayiran is a corporate label, similar to the "Tillai three thousand" used to refer to the diksitars of Citamparam, and may well refer to a group related to line of teachers of the later velala Saiva lineages. The Tiruvilaiyatappuranam refers to forty-eight thousand servants of Siva (civanatiyar) in Maturai who were rendering service to Siva (civattontu).[583] Members of the lineage were situated at several sites, as there was another matam with the same name at Tiruvanaikka, and members of the lineage at Tiruvilimilalilai[584] and Rajarajapuram.[585] The endowment at Tiruvavatuturai appears to have been made by a woman who was a follower of this group's teachings to support the outpost it maintained at Tiruvavatuturai.

Gurupuja

The epigraphical material I have examined both from

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582 no. 150.

583 Tiruvilayatal Puranam, prayer 22, cited in Rajamanickam, p. 217.

584 A.R.E. no. 392 of 1908.

585 A.R.E. no. 585 of 1908. There is a discussion of matas in A.R.E. 1909, para. 53, pp. 103-5, which refers to the narpattennayiravan-matam.

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Tiruvavatuturai and elsewhere is silent on the purpose and anticipated results of food offerings at temple sites or in matas, but there are present-day rites which, when examined, suggest the paradigm I have argued. In the matas maintained by Tiruvavatuturai and Dharmapuram such offerings are made on ritually significant occasions. They are sponsored by the present lineages which occupy the matas and thus figure in the lineages' ritual cycles. Though the intentions of the feedings were never articulated to me by anyone at the centres - perhaps because I never asked for an explanation - the circumstances in which they are made suggest an underlying connection with the sraddha rite. I have already made mention of such offerings when I described the presentation of daksina to an ascetic to conclude his participation in the ritual offering. As I noted then, this ritualized form of gifting and feeding ascetics occurs during gurupuja celebrations,[586] the central ritual in the velala lineages' annual calendar of events. The next chapter takes up a discussion of gurupuja and argues that some of the events it encodes are rooted in the paradigm of sraddha, and moreover, that this paradigm gives us some clue as to the religious significance of housing ascetic lineages at temple sites.

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586 I participated in gurupuja at Tiruvavatuturai in 1984 and 1985, and at Dharmapuram in 1984. I have sixteen hours of video tapes from these three celebrations. Glenn Yocum, "A Non-Brahmin Tamil Saiva Mutt: A Field Study of the Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam" also provides an introduction to gurupuja at Tiruvavatuturai.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

GURUPUJA

Each of the velala ascetic lineages celebrates a main gurupuja annually as its most important ritual event. The anniversary commemorated by this celebration is not the founding of the matam, as might be expected by a Westerner accustomed to thinking of beginning dates as of paramount importance. Rather, gurupuja commemorates the anniversary of the lineage's founder's "attainment of the fullness of Siva" (civaparipuranam), i.e., his death. All of the Saiva centres mark the death anniversary of their founder in this way. As I have discussed above, though Tiruvavatuturai, Dharmapuram, and the Kasi Matha at Tiruppanantal share a common distant lineage in that they all trace their lines back through the early Saiva Siddhanta preceptors known as the santanacaryas and beyond through a celestial line, the line of Kailasa, right to Siva himself, each centre measures its own line from the time a preceptor - that line's first preceptor - settled at the site where the centre is now located and began to teach and initiate disciples there. For the members of Tiruvavatuturai's lineage, Namaccivaya is the first, and thus the ancestral guru. His death

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anniversary - the time of his attainment - is the time for gurupuja.

Occurring during the Tamil month of Tai, gurupuja at Tiruvavatuturai is set within a ten-day festival involving the deities of the Gomuktisvara temple, the large Siva temple which is under the administration of the centre at present. Several days of ceremony and intensified worship at the camati of Namaccivaya lead up to the day of gurupuja. This intensified worship is part of the overall ritual, but the members of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam consider the final day of worship to be gurupuja proper.[587] Though these rites of gurupuja take place on the last day of the temple festival, and thus in one sense are the culmination of the festival, the two celebrations are ritually distinct while thematically interrelated. Any temple festival includes a number of concurrent rites and celebrations. Here is not the place to discuss all of the intricate connections among the different events brought together during this large celebration at Tiruvavatuturai;[588]

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[587] Tiruvavatuturai sends out invitations to gurupuja and programmes listing the important events of the temple festival as well as the nightly learned discourses and cultural performances that lead up to gurupuja. Affiliates of the atinam are encouraged to attend the festivities of all ten days, but the last day alone is gurupuja. The invitations that Tiruvavatuturai sent out in 1988 read, "His Holiness Sri-la Sri Sivaprakasa Pandarasannadhi Avl., Adheenakarthar, Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam sends His Blessings to and invites the presence of Sri ____ on the occasion of the Annual Gurupooja of Sri Namasivaya Murthigal on Monday the 25th January 1988 and procession in the night at Thiruvavaduthurai."

[588] During the temple festival a number of events described in the talapuranam of Tiruvavatuturai are re-enacted. These include Siva in the form of Tyaraja overcoming a demon, penance of Devi, processions of the deities, and, of course, a marriage celebration between Siva and Devi - events typical of brahmotsava. Tiruvavatuturai's lineage participates in some of these events, for example, kurumakacannitanam and the main temple priest together consecrate the processional images

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suffice it to say that one of the statements made in the symbolic language of gurupuja, namely that the guru incarnated by Namaccivaya and other preceptors of his line is pervaded by Siva's essence,[589] is reinforced by other events of the temple festival.[590]

Gurupuja for the members of the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam marks a time when the lineage celebrates its very being by remembering the continuity between the lineage's founder and its present head. The celebration is superbly complicated and involves what Turner calls the multivocal use of ritual symbols[591] that express the complex set of relations the centre has with devotees, patrons, employees, temple priests, and others, who come to exchange honours with kurumakacannitanam. This outline of the events of gurupuja is skeletal, as our concern here is with the rite of making offerings to ascetics

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before they are taken out of the temple. Likewise, tampiran represent the lineage by attending some of the re-enactments.

[589] During acaryabhisekam, the soul of the initiate, which has been properly consecrated with mantra, is drawn out by the preceptor. In its place, the sivatva, or "siva-ness" that pervades the preceptor, descends from Siva and passes through the preceptor into the initiate. The preceptor and newly initiated preceptor both share this essence. See discussion in Chapter Two.

[590] The pattern of pujas celebrated during gurupuja suggest an identification of Tiruvavatuturai's preceptors with Siva himself. All of the pujas performed during gurupuja are but aspects of the on-going puja to Siva emphasized by the temple festival. Many of the actions that centre around Siva during the temple festival are recreated during gurupuja with kurumakacannitanam in Siva's place. For example, the deity is taken daily on a procession through the four car streets that surround the temple; the night of gurupuja sees kurumakacannitanam in the same role.

[591] Victor Turner, "Symbols in African Ritual" in Lehmann and Myers, Magic, Witchcraft and Religion (Paolo Alto and London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 55-63.

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which occurs in the midst of the gurupuja celebration.

Two main rites of worship (puja) mark out the events of the day of gurupuja proper. One takes place in the morning, the other late at night. In between these two main events is a series of transactions which includes not only the offerings to ascetics, but also a special feeding of the members and most intimate followers of the lineage. The morning rite centres around a full sixteen-step puja at the camati of Namaccivaya, located in the centre of the matam. The present head of the lineage, kurumakacannitanam, conducts this rite himself. It is an extensive ritual, taking up a good part of the mid-morning. A number of preliminary rites lead way to Namaccivaya's worship. In addition to the steps kurumakacannitanam takes to prepare himself, he also attends to his personal puja, his worship of the sivalinga presented to him by his preceptor and predecessor, and to puja of the other sivalingas and other images housed in a special chamber near the camati of Namaccivaya. These are the tutelars of the lineage, as they were the images used in personal worship by Namaccivaya and other important figures in Tiruvavatuturai's line.

The replication of rites, first centred on kurumakacannitanam's personal sivalinga, then on those of the lineage, and finally on Namaccivaya in his camati suggest a line of identification running not only from the presence of Siva in the linga image to the presence of the preceptor in the camati, but also to the lineage itself. Just as at Dharmapuram, continual puja is at the heart of the lineage's very being, for puja is more than an act of devotion. It is also the actualization

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of the lineage.

What makes the gurupuja worship at the shrine of Namaccivaya different from what is done on any other day at is the fact that only kurumakacannitanam, the head of the lineage, will undertake it. On ordinary days kurumakacannitanam usually delegates this task to the senior member - and only qualified member[592] - of the small group of three to four[593] initiated ascetics (tampiran) who reside in the matam. During the nine days leading up to, and on the day of gurupuja, however, kurumakacannitanam exerts full control of the rites. Among the group of ascetic disciples, he alone has received the unction of preceptor (acaryabhiseka) and hence in him alone[594] is the preceptorhood vested. As preceptor, he is the living human heir of Namaccivaya. With him the lineage's future rests.

There is another way in which the days of gurupuja differs from other days. As noted elsewhere in this thesis, the majority of members

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592 Seniority is defined by initiation, not by age. The tampiran who usually performs puja to Namacivaya is younger than many of the other tampiran, but he is the only one stationed at Tiruvavatuturai to whom the present Gurumahasannidhanam has administered nirvanadiksa. This tampiran was at one time a member of Dharmapuram's lineage, but in about 1980, he broke his ties with that lineage.

593 At times Gurumahasannidhanam sends one of the resident tampiran to attend a function somewhere, or to check up on an outpost matam; on rare occasions a tampiran might wander off on his own, though technically he must secure Gurumahasannidhanam's leave before undertake any journeys, or doing anything outside of his prescribed daily regime.

594 As noted in Chapter One, the earlier preceptors of the line apparently adminstered acaryabhisekam to other tampiran besides the successor-designate. At present, all the velala Saiva centres follow the practice in which only the heir designate of the preceptor in office is administered this unction.

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of Tiruvavatuturai's ascetic lineage are ordinarily stationed at one or another of the centre's outposts. For gurupuja, however, all members of the lineage return home, as it were, to participate in the rite. Standing behind him in approximate order of status rank and participating vicariously, they accompany kurumakacannitanam as he engages himself in gurupuja. Indeed, this is a day when all members of the lineage's extended family, ascetic and lay, initiated and non-initiated, come to Tiruvavatuturai. The centre sends invitations out to its lay disciples and to others with whom there exists some type of formal obligation[595] or whom it is expedient to invite.[596] To attend

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[595] Protocol demands that the heads of the other Saiva lineages be invited to gurupuja. The inivitation is delivered by a member of appropriate rank (usually the senior tampiran) accompanied by a suitable entourage. On this occasion, he must wear a signet ring in addition to his lineage emblems. The size of his entourage of course varies depending on the importance of the lineage and Tiruvavatuturai's relationship with it. This process demands careful attention to protocol and it is sometimes used as an occasion to snub another lineage by conveying a message of disrespect, as happened in 1985 when Tiruvavatuturai sent a low ranking staff member to Dharmapuram, which responded in turn by sending an otuvar (temple hymn singer) to Tiruvavatuturai's gurupuja celebration. An otuvar is an important ritual specialist, but the age, size, and wealth of Tiruvavatuturai would ordinarily require someone of higher status to represent Dharmapuram. In addition to Dharmapuram's otuvar, there were in attendance in 1985 the personal servant of the head of the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal (who has no disciples), the head of the Suriyanarkoil Adhinan, the head of a householder lineage occupying a Saiva velala matam in the Chingleput area, a representatvie of the Mouna matam in Trichy, the head of a virasaiva matam located near Madras, and undoubtedly others whom I did not identify.

[596] Among the other things that gurupuja accomplishes is the occasion it gives the Adhinam to take inventory of the influence it wields in Tamil Saivite society. The Adhinam makes this appraisal by way of getting people of some influence to attend the celebration. Well-known scholars and respected orators are invited to deliver the religious and scholarly discourses held every evening of the ten days leading up to gurupuja. The bigger the presentor's reputation, the

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without an invitation is a breach of ritual etiquette.[597]

After kurumakacannitanam completes the puja to Namaccivaya and makes a number of circumambulations around the camati, a mid-day meal is

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better it reflects on Tiruvavatuturai. At the same time, the Adhinam cannot risk the loss of face if too many people decline the invitation to speak, so there is some weighing of risks involved with the scheduling of speakers. In 1985 the speakers included N. Murukavel, the editor of Tirukoyil, a monthly journal about South Indian temples published by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board, Dandapani Desikar from Dharmapuram, other scholars from Madras and the Tamil University in Tanjavur, as well as local scholars, while Dr. S.S. Janaki of the Kuppuswamy Sastri Research Institute was unable to attend. I was even co-opted to speak on the last day, as the presence of a foreign scholar always seems to enhance an event's prestige. In addition to securing the presence of learned people, the centre will invite local dignitaries it expects will attend. A picture in the newspaper of a wealthy Trichy businessman or local politician receiving sacred ash from the hands of kurumakacannitanam works wonders for the centre's reputation. Though it would be an exaggeration to claim that kurumakacannitanam's endorsement of a political party is all that influential, as a landlord of sizable tracts of cultivated land, the Adhinam does exercise economic control over a not insignificant number of voters.

[597] I made a terrible breach of protocol in 1985 when I invited Paul Younger, my thesis advisor, to attend without formally clearing the invitation with the Adhinam. I had mentioned to kurumakacannitanam that I had invited him, but I both neglected to obtain a formal invitation for him and his son, Ajit, from the general manager of the Adhinam and to let anyone else know they were coming. When Paul and Ajit arrived unexpectedly, I heard the shocked whisperings of the staff, which lessened somewhat when I let it be known that I had secured kurumakacannitanam's permission to invite them to the celebration. I realized then that the celebration is both inclusive and exclusive. Villagers living in Tiruvavatuturai and the surrounding area, are able to freely enter the main gathering hall of the matam in order to witness the puja to kurumakacannitanam; they also gather in droves to watch kurumakacannitanam be taken out on procession. For the rest of the year, they are lucky to get only the rarest glimpse of kurumakacannitanam and the matam is completely off-limits for them. In contrast, people of some importance ("VIP's"), who have whatever wherewithal it takes to secure an audience with kurumakacannitanam during the year, will not come to gurupuja unless they receive a formal invitation. And, some of these VIP's will see it to be more advantageous (for reasons of status, prestige, and power-brokering) not to attend even after they have been invited.

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served. This takes place in several areas. Visitors who are important, but not close devotees of the centre are served in one area of the matam; other visitors are served elsewhere, while kurumakacannitanam, the ascetics of the lineage, and lay disciples, who include some of the employees of the centre, are served in a feeding hall just adjacent to the area where Namaccivaya's camati is located. How people arrange themselves in this hall expresses their place within the lineage's sphere of operation. Kurumakacannitanam heads the group. The first rows facing kurumakacannitanam are occupied by the initiated ascetics, again arranged in a general order of seniority. Behind them, the other devotees of the centre are seated. After food is placed on each individual's banana leaf, the senior tambiran performs a brief aratanai by waving a lamp before kurumakacannitanam and the food before him. He repeats this action through the rows of tampiran and then by gesturing with the lamp to the right and left while moving up and down through a centre walkway dividing the rows facing kurumakacannitanam, he includes everyone else. This rite concludes with the senior tampiran facing kurumakacannitanam and the meal begins when kurumakacannitanam breaks rice with his fingers. The communal meal of Saiva devotees is known as mahesvarapuja, just as feeding or gifting any ascetic is called mahesvarapuja.

At approximately the same time as this mahesvarapuja is going on,[598] yet another group is fed in yet another area of the matam. This

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[598] At this time, many events are going on nearly simultaneously. Though the sequence of events has a formal importance, it is difficult to say which group actually began eating first in the tumble of

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group consists of other ascetics known as paradesi (of another place) who have been "invited"[599] to receive food from the centre. This feeding is called mahesvarapuja by people at the matam who apparently differentiate in speech between the two mahesvarapujas by knowing which mahesvaras they are referring to. Both are mahesvaras in that both groups share in devotion to Siva.[600]

Following the completion of the mid-day meal, a number of events punctuate the afternoon. These include both periods of rest and ritual transactions. The transactions which take kurumakacannitanam to different places in the matam, temple, and elsewhere are preceded and followed by kurumakacannitanam sharing blessings and honours with visitors in otukam, the hall where the pitam (seat of the guru) is

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everything happening at once. The best I can say is that the Saiva mendicants are fed at about the same time as the followers of the Adhinam. A tampiran begins this food offering with an aratanai to the ascetics, and then a servant of the centre makes the first offering of food. The ascetics were fed in an area adjacent to the library.

[599] Helene Brunner-Lachaux, Somasambhupaddhati, Troisieme partie, p. li, describes invitations to sraddha rites as "summons". The feeding and offerings that take place during gurupuja are well publicized; perhaps the spectre of such offerings provides enough incentive for an ascetic to present himself at the matam.

[600] Here it appears that mahesvara is understood to refer to any sincere devotee of Siva. It is an act of faith to assume that the Saiva mendicants are sincere in their devotions. I asked people from the matam at Tiruppanantal to explain the difference between Saiva mendicants (paradesi) and tampiran. They told me that tampiran were superior because they had received initiation from the Saiva lineages' preceptors whereas paradesi just wandered around wherever they chose. When I pointed out that even a mendicant must have had a teacher somewhere along the line, one person responded to the effect, "Yes, but who knows who they were."

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located.[601] Not least important of the visitors are contingencies of temple priests who come from the temples where the centre plays administrative roles. They present him with prasadam from their temples while he presents them with his blessings in the form of viputi. Others who are received by kurumakacannitanam include delegates from other religious centres, scholars, local politicians, important devotees, and other VIP's, all of whom represent the range of Tiruvavatuturai's involvements. These dignitaries exchange honours with kurumakacannitanam, by presenting him with fruit offerings and garlands, and receiving in return silk shawls, garlands and copies of the publication released to commemorate the gurupuja day.

The ritual transactions that take kurumakacannitanam out of otukkam are with those who cannot or should not enter this space. For example, the children of the village of Tiruvavatuturai, most of whose parents are in one way or another in the employ of the centre,[602] receive coins from kurumakacannitanam at a seldom used gateway opened specially for this occasion within the temple complex. During this

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[601] The term otukkam is derived from the verb otukku, which means to reduce, compress, or condense. The verb is also used to describe the involution of elements one into another at the end of an age. Ati Murukavel, the Director of Tiruvavatuturai's Correspondence Course, compared the movement of kurumakacannitanam, who performed the several morning pujas, distributed viputi and then retired into otukkam, with a day of Brahma, likening kurumakacannitanam's moments of absorption and quietude in otukkam with periods of rest between cycles of creation. This view also sees the guru's pitam as the source of all creation. Otukkam is not only used as a place of bhavana by kurumakacannitanam, he also holds audiences while seated on the pitam with anyone who comes to the matam on business.

[602] Most of the villages work the lands controlled by the Adhinam.

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afternoon, Gurumahasannnidhanam also makes a visit to the site, located to the north of the matam and temple complex, that houses the camatis of many of Tiruvavatuturai's earlier preceptors. There he attends abbreviated pujas preformed at each shrine.

In the later part of the afternoon, the ascetics (paradesis) who were offered food earlier are gathered in the large reception hall of the matam where kurumakacannitanam presents them, one at a time, with new ochre dhotis and handfuls of coins, gifts which, as I have argued above, are daksina for their participation in gurupuja. The tampiran of kurumakacannitanam's own line are also presented with new ochre dhotis during gurupuja, though not during this transaction. Upon receipt of the coins, the paradesi, whose presence is no longer needed, count their money and take leave of the matam.

The rest of the afternoon and early evening is taken up with more exchanges in otukkam, learned talks and entertainment in a performance hall recently built by the centre, rest and evening tiffin. At the beginning of the night, kurumakacannitanam completes the evening puja to Namaccivaya, and then accompanied by a procession of devotees and others makes his evening round in the temple, engaging himself in worship at all the shrines in the temple complex.

Finally, at about ten o'clock in the evening, the present head of the lineage is taken, like a deity in a palanquin, on a procession through the four streets that surround the matam and temple complex. During this procession, employees and others connected to the Adhinam

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who live along these streets[603] emerge from their houses, which are owned by the Adhinam, to greet the palanquin with the same type of puja tray used in temple worship. An exchange takes place in which the head of the lineage offers both blessings and a small gift of coins in exchange for the offerings. When the palanquin finishes its procession, the present head of the lineage is escorted back into the matam, installed on a special throne (pitam), where the senior member of the lineage conducts a purnakumbha puja (a puja in which a large pot full of sacralized water, representing what is worshipped, receives unction and other anointments) to him. Gurupuja has come full circle; the day began with worship of Namaccivaya and concludes with members, devotees and others affiliated with the Adhinam receiving vibhuti, flower garlands, and other forms of grace (prasadam)[604] from Tiruvavatuturai's present preceptor. Kurumakacannitanam's continuity with Namaccivaya, conceived in a physical as well as spiritual sense, has been asserted. Both his power as preceptor and the lineage's vitality have been recharged.

Puja is an Agamic rite that would seem to be quite unrelated to

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603 Unlike the villages who work mainly in the fields, the people who make offerings to kurumakacannitanam as his procession passes work in the matam or temple. Their occupations range from chauffer to accountant.

604 This prasadam is truly being redistributed, as many of the same garlands are reused during the day. A devotee will present kurumakacannitanam with a garland; later kurumakacannitanam presents it to someone else who has come to receive blessings in otukkam; the same garland might show up even later as offering made to kurumakacannitanam as he is on his night procession; it in turn will be given to another devotee who receives vibhuti from kurumakacannitanam after the final puja is completed.

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the Vedic sraddha rites, but the Agamic tradition the Adhinam inherited from its early preceptors shows a great deal of borrowing from the Vedic tradition.[605] Even for followers of the South Indian Agamic tradition, sraddha was a prescribed rite.[606] The Adhinam's expression of it in the form of puja rather than with Sanskrit mantra and pinda offerings reflects the paraparai (lineage tradition) of the members of the institution. At the heart of gurupuja is an act tied to the maintenance of the Tiruvavatuturai's lineage. The rite is self-reflexive; when kurumakacannitanam is engaged in the puja at the camati of Namaccivaya, he is engaged in an act that finds its validity in his own preceptorhood. Kurumakacannitanam is Namaccivaya, having partaken of Namaccivaya when administered the unction that made him guru. Whether to Namaccivaya or to kurumakacannitanam, each puja folds into the other, back to itself, and on to the lineage, made up of its succession and continuity of preceptors. Puja is the language the Adhinam speaks. Its tradition, its teachings, and its very being are tied to the continual undertaking of puja.

At this moment of self-reflection, time collapses; gurus of the past, present and future are all present. In this sense there are echoes of sraddha in the celebration of gurupuja. And it is indeed here that wandering Saiva ascetics play a role, though hardly as

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605 See Jan Gonda, Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit, pp. 168-71.

606 Somasambhu's discussions of sraddha (Helene Brunner-Lachaux, Somasambhupaddhati, Troisieme partie, pp. 620-63) demonstrate that it was a rite prescribed for followers of the South Indian Agamic tradition.

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representatives of the pitarah of lineage, for kurumakacannitanam himself, as the ascetic preceptor, embodies his lineage's manes. Rather, the offering to these ascetics is a symbolic gesture that encodes the significance of the gurupuja rite, while expressing it in a language somewhat different from the Adhinam's own. Of all the different groups received, blessed and honoured by kurumakacannitanam, only these ascetics have no direct relationship to the Adhinam. Everyone else - employee, patron, devotee - has some role to play in the Adhinam's vast net of operations - everyone except the paradesi ascetics. But they are still invited properly fed and gifted, even if their presence seems oddly peripheral to all the other comings and goings of gurupuja.

The gurupuja for the founder of the lineage is the central rite of the ritual year, but a gurupuja is performed on the death anniversaries of all of the preceptors of Tiruvavatuturai's line, though on much smaller scale. For those whose camatis are located at Tiruvavatuturai, the rite is performed there. For the others whose camatis are elsewhere, a member or designated representative of the lineage will conduct the gurupuja, unless the head of the lineage plans a pilgrimage to coincide with the date, in which case he will undertake the rite himself. In 1984, a year after the present kurumakacannitanam became head of the lineage, I had the occasion to witness his coming to Avudaiyarkoil, in the Puttukottai District, to undertake one of these pujas himself, as well as consolidate his influence in that area.

In terms of its overall activities, this event in no way

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matched the ten days of festivities and ritual transactions that take place at Tiruvavatuturai during the gurupuja to Namaccivaya. Nonetheless, the temple manager, who is in the employ of the Adhinam, as Tiruvavatuturai administers the large and famous Siva temple at Avudaiyarkoil,[607] was quite attentive to pomp and ceremony in his organization and execution of the event. Decorations were lavish, garlands were practically ostentatious, the food served was exquisite. The events of the day consisted largely of a reception in Tiruvavatuturai's matam at Avudaiyarkoil which involved a puja to kurumakacannitanam, a communal meal, a visit to the temple and the puja at the camati of Pin Vellappatecikar, the eleventh of Tiruvavatuturai's line. Included, as well, was a special feeding and presentation by kurumakacannitanam of new ochre cloth and coins to the wandering Saiva ascetics (paradesis) of the area who could be assembled in the matam. Their presence was not coincidental, as the temple manager went to some lengths to publicize the event so that an impressive number of ascetics would be in attendance.[608] Both from what I witnessed and gathered in

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[607] In 1984 the devastana manager was S.S. Ganapati, a retired deputy collector of the district. As the administration of the temple is under Tiruvavatuturai's control, he was directly employed by the Adhinam and ran the temple's affairs from Tiruvavatuturai's outpost matam. Avudaiyarkoil is also known as Tiruperunturai. It is here where Manikkavacakar received initiation from Siva who came to him in the form of a guru. See La Legende des jeux de Civa a Madurai (Pondichery: 1960), pp. 91-102 and George Pope, "The legendary history of the Tamil poet, saint, and sage Manikkavacagar" in his Tiruvacagam, Part I, pp. xvii-xxxii.

[608] Approximately forty ascetics received offerings from kurumakacannitanam. This number was higher than the staff at Avudaiyarkoil had anticipated; kurumakacannitanam ran out of ochre cloth about two thirds of the way through the presentation.

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conversation with the devastana manager,[609] this presentation to wandering ascetics was an essential feature of the day's events. In any of the gurupuja celebrations, whether the main one at Tiruvavatuturai, or the minor ones conducted elsewhere, there is a certain degree of improvisation or fluidity. Who is at hand, what resources are available, how energetic the organizers are all help determine the scope of the celebration. The ritual has no script, per se, except perhaps the requirement that it involve puja to the preceptor on whose death anniversary it is performed. For the 1984 gurupuja at Avudaiyarkoil, the events were determined by an series of exchanges between Tiruvavatuturai and its outpost at Avudaiyarkoil. To have included the presentation to wandering ascetics suggests that someone felt it right to ensure it be part of the celebration. Exactly why? I do not know their exact reasons, but for sure somebody felt that the honouring of Saiva ascetics ought to be done during times of remembering the lineage's ancestors, who are after all not thought to be dead, but rather in eternal camati. The provision to feed ascetics during a gurupuja celebration is not simply a rite within a rite, a mahesvarapuja within a gurupuja, but instead an act that reiterates the deep structure of the event.

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609 Though well off the beaten path, Avudaiyarkoil is an important pilgrimage site. Its association with Manikkavacakar and the S.S. Ganapati's reputation for generosity attract a good number of Saiva mendicants to the temple. Even so, S.S. Ganapati told me that he ordered his staff to round up ascetics in preparation for kurumakacannitanam's visit.

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Observations

Well over a thousand years separate the paradesi presence at Tiruvavatuturai's gurupuja from the feedings of sivayogis, tapasvis, devotees, brahmanas and others that are recorded in the Cola inscriptions, yet what happens at Tiruvavatuturai appears to reflect what is described in the epigraphs. On an auspicious occasion, special food offerings are provided to individuals of special status. These offerings, made in the context of dana, replicate a root paradigm of sraddha, a theme quite close to the ritual intent of gurupuja.

Nonetheless, there are some important differences. At present at Tiruvavatuturai ascetics who occupy the matam make these offerings to wandering ascetics, whereas in the inscriptions I have cited, ascetics are rarely the donors, though often the donees. Instead, the donors are occasionally kings, but more often simply prominent individuals who had either the political connections or the wherewithal to get their names in print. They achieved this end by one or another act of charity. Yet, nowadays and for the past four hundred years and more, there are matas run by ascetic brotherhoods who among other things undertake similar acts of charity themselves. These ascetics have been, and still are, not only the receivers of gifts, but they have also come to be those who redistribute them. It is in this sense that there is a rite within a rite in the mahesvarapuja, or mahesvarapujas, for, as we have seen, there is more than one feeding that takes place during gurupuja; the communal meal of devotees of the lineage is also known as

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mahesvarapuja.

The ascetics of Tiruvavatuturai's line have come to be sponsors and patrons of events not all that dissimilar to ones at which they, at other times, in other places, and in other guises, received patronage. This shift of roles is in itself not a recent development; some of the earlier matas of Cola times had come to be a permanent or near-permanent residences of groups of ascetics distinguished from each other by lineage affiliations. Not all matas mentioned in Cola inscriptions were so occupied, only some. Of those that were, the institutional make-up of the ascetic brotherhood usually entailed some involvement with the affairs of the temple and its networks of influence. Matas so occupied were still places that enabled ascetics to be present at temple sites, but the roles of the ascetics had expanded to involve more than their presence. Likewise, the matas they occupied were still places where redistribution through a ritualized form of gifting was institutionalized. The difference, however, was that here the ascetics were not merely any ascetics, but members of ascetic brotherhoods, and further, they were involved in the process of redistribution, rather than simply being recipients of forms of dana. Even so, the simpler sense of the matam continues; many of the matas referred to in Cola inscriptions appear to have been nothing more than shelters, resthouses and places where special feedings took place. Even today, that meaning is not lost. The ascetic brotherhoods of the velala centres still maintain such resthouses at the temples they administer and the pilgrimage places where they own land.

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PART FOUR

CASTE AND CONCLUSIONS

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CHAPTER NINE

CASTE

Some one hundred and fifty years after Kurunanacampantar took up residence in the matam just adjacent to the temple at Dharmapuram, one of his successors produced a rather unusual text, the Varnasramacandrika.[610] Its content, the account of how it came to be written, and even the language in which it was written, suggest that the Varnasramacandrika was produced at a time when these Saiva lineages felt a need to explain their existence. This chapter will look at how that explanation related to both their identity and what they were doing.

Unlike most works compiled by the inmates of Dharmapuram, the Varnasramacandrika is in Sanskrit and not Tamil, the language of the matam's own canon. As discussed earlier, Dharmapuram, like the other Saiva velala matas, defines itself as a Saiva Siddhanta centre and at present it recognizes the Tamil Tirumurai and fourteen Tamil texts variously known as the Meykantar Sastras or the Saiva Siddhanta Sastras

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610 Tiruvampalatecikar, Varnasramacandrika, edited by Narayanasastri et al, with introduction by Na. Cattainatattampiran, (Mayuram and Kumbhakonam: 1930).

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as the authoritative works of its tradition. In its present publications it repeatedly draws attention to its Tamil character. Whether it was so dogmatic about being a Tamil institution in the late seventeenth century is another question that is somewhat difficult to answer, given the records we have from that period. What we do know is that the works coming from Dharmapuram from its very beginning have been Tamil works, with a few exceptions.[611]

In contrast, the Varnasramacandrika is in Sanskrit, though it is not the only of Dharmapuram's works to use Sanskrit material.[612] Other

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[611] Members of Dharmapuram's lineage came out of a line of preceptors known for their Tamil scholarship. Members of this network include Nirampu Alakiya Tecikar and others who were quite proficient in the genre of talapurana, or temple chronicle. Kurunanacampantar's own preceptor, the sixteenth century Kamalainanaprakacar, is renown for such works as the Tirumaluvatipuranam, and Kurunanacampantar himself is considered to have composed eight small poems in Tamil, five devotional works and three philosophical. His successors and their disciples continued in the production of Tamil literary works. Kumarakuruparar, disciple of the fourth preceptor, considered to be one of the most famous and popular figures in the Tamil literary history of the seventeenth century authored eleven poems of exquisite literary beauty, which include the Minatciyammai Pillaittamil, the Kantar Kali Venpa and others. In addition to poetic works, members of Dharmapuram also produced numerous ritual manuals and philosophical texts expousing the Saiva Siddhanta system in the commentarial tradition of Arulnanticivacarya and Civakkirayokikal. Fourteen of these works, collectively known as the Pantara Cattiram by virtue of their compliation by the centre's early pantaras, or preceptors, make up Dharmapuram's own canon.

[612] The works of Velliyampalattampiran also cite Sanskrit material. Velliyampalattampiran quotes extensively from Agamic and other Sanskrit sources, many of which are no longer extant, in his Tamil commentaries on Mutti Nittayam and Nanaparana Vilakkam, two works by Kurunanacampantar. This Velliyampalavanattampiran was patronized by a ruler of Mysore and, like Sri-la-Sri Tiruvampalattecikar, the compiler of the Varnasramacandrika, he lived at the end of the seventeenth century. Both of these factors may have influenced the use of Sanskrit material.

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works have cited Sanskrit material, but the Varnasramacandrika addresses a Sanskrit speaking audience. Its colophon attributes its compilation to Tiruvampalavatecikar, the seventh preceptor in the line of Kurunanacampantar.[613] As far as I know, the Varnasramacandrika is the only work attributed to a member of a velala lineage to have been produced entirely in Sanskrit. The text is a collection of quotations from Agamic and Puranic sources - eight-five works in all - linked together with a commentary. Works cited include the Sivapurana and other important puranas, many of the Agamas, paddhati texts such as the Somasambhupaddhati and the Acintyavisvasadhakhya, among other works. All of the text, Tiruvampalatecikar's commentary included, is in Sanskrit.

There is another way in which the Varnasramacandrika is an unusual text for Dharmapuram. Most works from Dharmapuram are typical of the kind generated by religious institutions. Such texts deal with ritual practices, devotional sentiment, and philosophical concerns consistent with the lineage's affiliation with a religious tradition. Here again, the Varnasramacandrika is somewhat different. Its title gives us a clue as to what the text is all about: it is the "illumination" (candrika) on caste (varna) and station (asrama). In other words, status is its concern. The text offers an investigation into the concept of adhikaram (right or qualification) which it accomplishes by reviewing statements culled from the various authorities mentioned above. Its method of textual exegesis is not unusual: its

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[613] Varnasramacandrika, sl. 8, va. 1-4, pp. 4f.

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focus is. Both the language of the text and its concerns suggest that the text was addressed to an audience quite different from the Tamil scholars of the lineage. A story which relates the circumstances that led to the compilation of the text helps identify that audience.

How the Varnasramacandrika Came To Be Compiled

In this century several histories of the centre have recounted a story about Tiruvampalatecikar which offers an explanation for the singular character of the Varnasramacandrika. The story centres around the mid-day puja at the camati of Kurunanacampantar. According to Dharmapuram's tradition, its fourth head, Sri-la-Sri Macilamanittecikar, had the site built up into a granite temple that is now called the Sri Nanacampantapperuman (Skt. Sri Jnanapurisvaraswami) temple.[614] The linga in the temple is believed to mark the camati, though a sivacarya maintains the puja rites, rather than an initiate of Dharmapuram, an unusual delegation of ritual duty that we have already mentioned above. Hagiographic material about Sri-la-Sri Tiruvampalatecikar, the seventh preceptor of Dharmapuram, tells that he came to compile the Varnasramacandrika out of a need to defend the sanctity of this site.

In brief, the account goes as follows,[615]

The king of Tanjavur happened to be passing through Dharmapuram

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614 Mutt and Temples, p. 66.

615 This version is taken from Na. Cattaitattampiran, "Nulaciriyar" in Varnasramacandrika, pp. 5-12.

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while on a pilgrimage to Kaverippumpattinam, where he wished to bathe at the confluence of the Kaveri River and the ocean. Just as the king's palanquin entered Dharmapuram, the gongs sounded the puja in the temple of Sri Nanacampantapperuman [Sanskrit: Sri Jnanapurisvaraswami], the shrine where the camati of Kurunanacampantar is located. The king ordered his retinue to halt in front of the temple, and, descending from the palanquin, he worshipped Sri Jnanpurisvaraswami. He then undertook to continue on the way.

However, some smarta brahmins in the king's retinue, who were jealous of the Saivagamic practices, questioned the king's action by telling him that he, a ksatriya, had, out of ignorance, polluted himself by worshipping the camati of a sudra. They told the king that he would have to undertake a purification ritual and, lest anyone else make the same mistake, he should have the temple destroyed. As he had no opportunity to investigate the matter and as his time to experience the preceptor's grace had come, the king responded to the words of his smarta advisors by ordering some of his men to carry out the destruction of the temple as they wished. The king again resumed the march.

The men thus entered the temple of Nanacampantaperuman, armed with crowbars. Inside, shocked worshippers reproached the king's men for the act they were about to commit. Though their arguments convinced the king's men of the impropriety of their action, the soldiers responded that they, servants of the king, could only follow his orders and carry out the destruction of the temple. The devotees then ran to Tiruvampalatecikar and begged him to go to the king to have him stop this horrible action.

Tiruvampalatecikar, however, contemplated:

> If it is said that God is weak,
> Then they say a great disaster has come in the temple.
> But, Oh Lord, what can we perceive by looking
> At that which is created and destroyed by you alone?[616]

Comforting the disciples, he mused,

> When a calamity has come to afflict the Saiva temples
> in a country,

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[616] The verses uttered by Tiruvampalatecikar were composed by Kurunanacampantar, Civapotaka Caram (Dharmapuram: 1971), vs. 105. See Celvakkanapati, "Tarumatina Kuruparamparai Varalaru", in Anaittulak Caiva Cittanta Mutal Kuruttarankam Vila Malar, notes 66 and 67.

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Oh Lord, am I to renounce the king of that country?
Or criticize you, who gives rise to the fruition of actions?
Tell me.[617]

That which is there, will it vanish? That which is not, will it come?
Will a flood not fill in a ditch?
Oh my ignorant heart, which secretly mutters as if bewitched,
Has Siva died?[618]

Then Tiruvampalatecikar, gathering resolve, called all of his disciples to him and repeated the pancaksara [the mantra namaccivaya], using the form that includes the bija [the initial syllable om: om namaccivaya] and concludes with the astramantra. As he did this, blood began to gush in the temple from every spot the soldiers' crowbars hit. The king's soldiers, in turn, fell down in a state of unconsciousness.

Meanwhile, the king, who had left Dharmapuram, was proceeding on the way to Kaverippumpattinam. But, at the moment the soldiers had begun to wield their crowbars, the king became blind in both eyes and his smartha followers lost their power of speech. The king and his followers were at first astonished at this event, but then the king understood that it was related to the order he had given earlier to pull down a temple.

Dispatching a few men to hurry back to stop the destruction at the temple, he turned around and headed back towards Dharmapuram. He was met by the men he had sent ahead of him. As they described the pandemonium in the temple, he grew more horrified at what he had effected when he heeded the words of his smarta advisors.

The king then summoned some elders who lived in Dharmapuram. They recounted the history of Kurunanacampantar and told of the greatness of the guru [gurumurtam] that had been installed there. Their words were like atonement to the king. He calmed down, dismissed his army, and humbly entered the matam.

He came before Tiruvampalatecikar, prostrated before him like a devotee, and begged in self-reproach that he be able to expiate the wickedness his ignorant act had brought about. Tiruvampalatecikar took him to the temple, where the Lord gave

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617 Civapotaka Caram, vs. 106.

618 Civapotaka Caram, vs. 104.

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him sight in one eye so that he could take darsan of Sri Nanacampantapperuman.

With the sight of one eye restored, the king was able to see the blood gushing in the temple and his men lying about unconscious. He again beseeched Tiruvampalatecikar, who took viputi [sacred ash] and strewed it on the soldiers to revive them. As they rose and worshipped at the guru's shrine, blood stopped flowing in the temple.

After Tiruvampalatecikar and the king, along with his retinue, took darsan of the Lord, they returned to the matam. There the king entreated Tiruvampalatecikar to restore the sight of his other eye and to return the power of speech to his smarta advisors. Tiruvampalatecikar told the king to complete his pilgrimage to Kaverippumpattinam and then return to Dharmapuram, where he was to stay for the period of one mantalam [approximately 45 days], worshipping Sri Nanacampantapperuman.

The king thus followed Tiruvampalatecikar's instructions. When he returned from Kaverippumpattianam he set up camp in the southeast side of Dharmapuram and worshipped daily in the temple. One day, the king approached Tiruvampalatecikar, saying,

> "My advisors had said that you are a sudra and that you are not qualified for the state of sannyasa."

The king said that this statement had led to his state of confusion. He entreated Tiruvampalatecikar to bless him with the truth, established beyond doubt on the basis of the Agamas, that all four varnas had the right to sannyasa. Tiruvampalatecikar thus compiled the Varnasramacandrika and taught it to the king and others. The smarta followers, who earlier had degraded the king for worshipping in front of the temple of Sri Nanacampantapperuman, felt ashamed of their ignorance of Agamic rules and they paid respect to Tiruvampalatecikar.

At the end of their prescribed period of stay the king had sight restored to his other eye and his smarta followers recovered their ability to speak. The king then established the arttayamakattalai, an endowment of tax-free land entitled to be used to conduct the arttayama [Sanskrit: arthajama, final sacred period of the day] puja, since he had first worshipped Sri Jnanapurisvara at that time. Taking leave of Tiruvampalatecikar, the king returned to Tanjavur laden with presents.

When the king's advisor, Govinda Diksitar, heard of the

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> miraculous event that had taken place, he himself came to Dharmapuram and engaged Tiruvampalatecikar in a debate on sastric points. As a result, Govinda Diksitar came to forsake his own teacher and built a matam for Tiruvamplaltecikar (i.e., for his lineage) at Tiruccattimurram where puja and mahesvarapuja were conducted daily. Govinda Diksitar also installed an image of Tiruvampalatecikar at Tiruvaiyaru, where he endowed Tiruvampalatecikar with the management of the temple in order that all the temple's rituals, festivals, etc., would be conducted out without lapse.

The account appears to depict a time in which members of the lineage were obliged to authenticate their existence. Because this material was published in the 1930's, a time of growing antagonism between brahmins and non-brahmins in South India, one must treat it cautiously. However, the Varnasramacandrika is an unusual text, addressed to a Sanskrit-speaking audience. Though we can never know for certain why the text was compiled, this account, suspect or not, merits some attention. Over the next pages I will try to put the material in context.

Right of Existence

The issue the story addresses is whether Kurunanacampantar was eligible to be what his followers and worshippers claimed, and whether they in turn were entitled to perpetuate that claim, which they had institutionalized in the camati, the matam, and the lineage. To these questions the story clearly answers yes: the very objections the smarta brahmins raise strike them dumb; the king is blinded by his folly. The non-brahmins of Dharmapuram ultimately triumph; the sacrality of

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Kurunanacampantar's shrine meets the challenges. Indeed, the demonstration of this sacrality is extremely significant. Tiruvampalatecikar proves the sanctity of the shrine through his repetition of the sabija pancaksara, the mantra namacivaya that is prefaced with the syllable om, the bija or seed into which all the force of the mantra is condensed. The outpouring of blood in the temple, the unconsciousness of the king's men, the king's blindness, and his smarta advisors' dumbness, were all precipitated by his repetition of this form of the mantra. And, finally, the king was able to recover his sight only after the penance of daily worship at Kurunanacampantar's shrine. The most potent symbol of a religious institution is the never-ceasing ritual at its founder's camati.

Tiruvamplaltecikar's use of the sabija mantra is important. The weak, the infirm, women, and sudras, even initiated sudras, were ordinarily forbidden the use of om in their mantras. For Tiruvampalatecikar to subdue his challengers with this mantra evinced that he, the living embodiment of Kurunanacampantar's sacrality, was endowed with a power that transcended their imputations. At the same time, however, the way the story makes its point is intriguing: the label of sudra that is applied to Kurunanacampantar, and thus to the institution at Dharmapuram, is never questioned. In fact, the story relates that Tiruvampalatecikar went so far to defend his status as sudra that he compiled the Varnasramacandrika to prove his rights.

<u>Varnasramacandrika</u>

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According to this story, then, the Varnasramacandrika is all about status, but not quite as the story presents it. Though it addresses the question of eligibility, the Varnasramacandrika does not quite accomplish what the story claims, namely that sudras are eligible to take sannyasa. Rather it argues for the right of sudras to receive all levels of Saiva initiations -- samayadiksa, visesadiksa, nirvanadiksa, and acaryabhiseka discussed above.

These stages of initiation have little to do with the Vedic consecrations, or with the Dharmasastric samskaras, based on the investiture of the sacred thread, that demarcate the classical stages of life, the last of which is sannyasa. Instead, as we have seen above, the Saiva initiations progressively admit the qualified initiate into the cycle of Agamic practices centred on the worship of Siva through mantra and mudra. Though considerations of concepts such as varna and asrama sometimes feature in discussions of rites in Agamic sources,[619] such notions are essentially alien to the tradition's basic formulation. Ripeness of soul, signs of grace, the proper preceptor, previous stages of initiation, and so on, are the initiate's prerequisites.[620] In contrast, in a "Vedic" system, the principle of hierarchy determines qualification.

When the Varnasramacandrika defends the right of the sudra to

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[619] Helene Brunner[-Lachaux], "Les categories sociales vediques dans le sivaisme du Sud", in Journal Asiatique, vol. 252, pp. 451-72.

[620] Saivaparibhasa of Sivagrayogin, pp. 293-95. These same points are covered in the Varnasramacandrika, pp. 16-20.

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receive Saiva initiation, its position is neither revolutionary nor radical as far as the Agamic tradition is concerned. Certain Agamic sources, which the Varnasramacandrika cites, had already considered the question of the sudra's eligibility.[621] Not all Agamic texts raise the question, and not all texts agree on the sudra's rights, but the textual discussions indicate that in general the Agamic tradition was less troubled by the issue of caste status than were the king's smarta advisors in the story.

Agamic Discussions about Eligibility

In the Agamic works that raise the issue, the question of a sudra's eligibility comes into play only at the third level of initiation, nirvanadiksa. But even at that level, the Agamas are, by and large, quite willing to include the sudras among the ranks of the initiates. The most liberal of them demonstrate willingness to give nirvanadiksa to all, even members of the most debased groups.[622] There are other texts, less liberal, that exclude these lowest groups, but admit certain mixed (the anuloma and pratiloma) groupings;[623] others restrict initiation only to members of the four principle varna groups. Finally, the most strict of the Agamas admit sudras only if they are

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621 Brunner, "Les categories sociales vediques", pp. 471ff.

622 Ibid., p. 461. Brunner cites the Kamika, and the Acintyavisva.

623 Ibid., citing the Suprabheda.

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"pure" sudras (sat-sudras).[624]

On the question of acaryabhiseka, the discussion in Agamic texts follows much the same pattern, but more rigorously. Neither members of debased groups nor mixed groups are admitted to the rank of preceptor, though some texts do accord anuloma castes an equivalent "sudra" status.[625] Members of all four varnas are generally considered able to undergo acaryabhiseka,[626] though some texts equivocate on the admissibility of sudras. Again these texts resolve the issue by citing the particular qualities of sat-sudras that override any hesitations about the ritual status of sudras (who, by implication, are ordinarily asat, or "impure"). Thus among the groups classified as sudra, sat-sudras are considered admissible to all levels of initiation.[627]

Sat-Sudras

Sat-sudras are generally described by the Agamic ritual manuals as those sudras who come from "good" families, who do not drink liquor, who adher religiously to the daily rites prescribed by the Agamas, and

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[624] Ibid., citing the Raurava and the Parakhya.

[625] Ibid., citing the Acintyavisva, Kamika, and the Sarvajnottara.

[626] Ibid., citing the Kirana and Suprabheda.

[627] Ibid.

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who are devotees of Siva.[628] These qualities, assumed by - rather than ascribed to - the sudra suggest that the initiate has attained the requisite state of purity that characterizes readiness for the higher levels of initiation. In effect, sat-sudras appear to have acquired a state of purity which off-sets their ordinarily impure state. Nonetheless, in most discussions, the sudra - even the initiated sat-sudra - remains a sudra, though the texts are ambivalent on the importance of that categorization, as it relates to both Agamic initiation and Agamic practices. The sat-sudra is admitted to these rites, but there is but little attempt to restrict his range of ritual activity.

For example, several texts differentiate among the general categories of initiation and limit the sudra to types (such as nirbijadiksa, or diksa without the use of om) which incorporate no elements (such as om) from which sudras would be excluded by Dharmasastric reckoning.[629] Texts like these acknowledge a barrier in varna status, but within their own Agamic system, varna is not a dominant issue. The question of varna is typically mentioned only in passing as the various rites are described, administration of diksa is not correlated with varna, most varna barriers can be qualified as to render them ineffectual, and sudras are not automatically disqualified from Agamic initiations.

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[628] Ibid. See also Sivagrayogin [Civakkirayokikal], Saivaparibhasa of Sri Sivagrayogindrajnanasivacarya, edited by H.R. Rangaswamy Iyengar and R. Ramasastri (Mysore: 1960), part v:3.

[629] Brunner-[Lachaux], "Les Categories Vediques", p. 462.

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The Varnasramacandrika

These earlier texts provide the context of the Varnasramacandrika's discussion of adhikaram (right or qualification). A late 17th century text, the Varnasramacandrika distills several centuries of scattered references to varna (and also asrama) to construct a detailed defense of the sudra's place in Agamic practices. The text begins by establishing that there is no enmity between what the Agamas say and what the Vedas say.[630] Thus, according to the Varnasramacandrika, the Agamas are not only equivalent to the Vedas in terms of scriptural authority, but ultimately more sublime because they come directly from the mouth of Siva, and because the practices they reveal lead to the highest form of liberation, whereas Vedic practices only enhance worldly enjoyment.[631] Then, using the grounds of scriptural authority as the cornerstone of its argument, the text arranges the various Agamic pronouncements on varna (caste), asrama (stage of life), and diksa (initiation) to demonstrate conclusively that the sudra can fit all criteria of eligibility.

But, to establish eligibility, the text first has to recognize grounds of ineligibility. It does, very early in the discussion in a rather clever way. It observes that women and sudras are not eligible to be administered the samskaras (rites centering around the investiture

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[630] Varnasramacandrika, pp. 4-12.

[631] Ibid., p. 14.

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of the sacred thread) enjoined to the three varnas, but it is claimed that they are eligible for diksa. It asks, in effect, how can that be?[632] It responds that the samskaras are done for members of the three varnas disregarding their differences in birth rank, so in the same way, the saivasamskaras (diksa) are done to all four varnas when signs of grace (saktipata, etc.) are apparent.[633] In other words, it observes that the general rule permitting members of the upper three varnas the samskaras is not concerned with the difference in rank among these varnas, and draws an analogy to the saivasamskaras.

Once it has established that point, the main problem the text faces is to provide demonstrable indication of grace, which, as a divine instrument, is not subject to human discrimination. The text argues that dispassion, orientation towards moksa, etc., are signs from which the state of grace can be inferred.[634] These characteristics define eligibility; the state is clearly acquired, but its source cannot be challenged. To the doubt that the sudra-ness, which excludes asat-sudras (impure sudras) from rites, pervades all sudras, sat-sudras notwithstanding, the text rebuts that sat-sudras, those sudras from good families, those who avoid meat-eating, and so on, are so joined with the state of purity that there can be no question about their state of

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632 Ibid., p. 20.

633 Ibid.

634 Ibid., p. 41. See Helene Brunner-Lachaux, Somasambhupaddhati. Troisieme Partie, p. 480 for a further discussion on this question.

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grace.[635] And, lest any difficulties with jati (caste) remain, the text provides numerous Agamic citations that describe how diksa burns off jati[636]. Through diksa, the sudra obtains twice-born status.[637] Examples of differences when diksa is administered (for example, how the hair is to be cut or not cut according to varna status) and discussions of different types of diksa then underscore the admittance of the sudra to these rites.[638] Each varna group follows a procedure in accordance with its status; the sudras - like brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas - have their own rules to follow.

Then the text introduces the issue of asrama (stage of life), to follow up the discussion of varna and qualification. The text defines the four stages of life, and then focusses on the first stage, brahmacarya, which it classifies in two types, bhautika, which is a temporary state leading to the state of householder, and naisthika, or a state of life-long celibacy.[639] By organizing the discussion in this way, the text opens up the possibility for a sudra to assume the role of an ascetic. While not giving the sudra the right to either vanaprastha or sannyasa, the latter two stages of life, the discussion of naisthika

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[635] Ibid. See also discussion about diksa eliminating the bonds that weigh the soul, pp. 24-26. In these passages, the Suprabheda is quoted as saying that diksa burns off jati.

[636] Ibid. See also pp. 30-35, passim.

[637] The individual who has received the rites of diksa is considered the Saiva dvija.

[638] Varnasramacandrika, following verses from Suprabheda and Kalaniyamas, p. 27.

[639] Ibid., p. 38.

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brahmacarya creates a category analogous to that of sannyasa. It appears that the text is hesitant to openly accord the sudra all Dharmasastric stages of life, because it is never quite willing to argue that the sudra is entitled to Dharmasastric samskaras. By implication, the sudra is admitted to either a state of life-long celibacy (naisthika) or a married state (grhastha), states that accord with but do not impinge upon Dharmasastric stages.

It is in the context of this discussion that the question of the sudra's eligibility for preceptorhood is introduced. The text quotes a passage from the Sutasamhita which states that gurutvam (preceptorhood) is permissible for one under any of the four asramas.[640] After some discussion about which teacher is the best, in which contradictory passages are cited from many texts to demonstrate that the whole question of the best teacher cannot be resolved, the discussion takes up the qualities of the householder preceptor (the grhastacarya).[641] Then, in a comparison of qualities displayed by the person who is naisthika (life-long celibate) and the person who is grhasta (a householder), the text concludes with the support of passages from both the Acintyavisva and the Suprabhedagama that the naisthikacarya is a superior teacher, because of the characteristics of compassion, and so on,[642] though it recognizes that the issue of who is the best teacher is essentially a useless question because of the many

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[640] Ibid., p. 62.

[641] Ibid., p. 84.

[642] Ibid., pp. 82-83.

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contexts to which it can be applied.[643]

The rest of the text deals with different types of initiation and a variety of other rites. Underlying the discussions on ritual propriety, variations of initiation, internalization of agnihotra, methods of linga installation, and so on, is the assertion that the sudra has a rightful place in the Agamic ritual arena. However, as I pointed out above, that right was never really in doubt as far as the Agamas themselves were concerned.

In arguing that "pure" sudras (sat-sudras) manifest in their good attributes the "ripeness of the soul", and thus readiness for initiation,[644] the text is only summarizing the position found in certain Agamic texts. Likewise, when the Varnasramacandrika states that initiation itself burns off any lingering effects of birth or jati,[645] it is reiterating what has previously been argued. Why then was the issue - apparently long resolved - taken up once again in the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century?

Naisthikacarya

The text, however, supports not only the right of the sudra to receive initiation, but also that the sudra has the right to become a preceptor. This assertion is buttressed by the argument that the

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643 Ibid., p. 84.

644 Ibid., p. 203.

645 Ibid., pp. 24-26.

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naisthikacarya, or teacher who has maintained life-long celibacy, is a superior teacher because of his special qualities of dispassion, and so on. Underlying the discussion of the naisthikacarya is the suggestion that the purity acquired through life-long celibacy is an important factor. In light of the Agamic position on sat versus asat sudras, this suggestion takes on an added dimension. Indeed, this state of life-long celibacy offsets any inherent impurity ordinarily associated with the sudra. At Dharmapuram, the distinguishing characteristic of members of the lineage has been the state of life-long celibacy. What separates them from the lay people who frequent this centre is this state of naisthika. Moreover, classified as a naisthikacarya, the sudra preceptor is in an interesting position. Without ever actually defying Dharmastric proscriptions, the sudra preceptor who is naisthikacarya manages to by-pass their efficacy.

Here, the account of why it was written is similar. Tiruvampalatecikar never rejected the label of sudra that was applied to his lineage; instead he defended his honour as a sudra by compiling the Varnasramacandrika. By accepting the label of sudra, neither the story nor the text offers up a challenge to brahminical classifications, though by uttering the sabija mantra Tiruvampalatecikar pushed his right as a member of Dharmapuram's lineage about as far as it could go within the confines of an Agamic system. Perhaps what the story is telling us is not so much about caste conflict, but about religious competition - with stakes taking the form of temple endowments. There are three groups of players in the story: the king, the smarta brahmins, and the

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members of the non-brahmin Saiva matam. By pausing to worship at Kurunanacampantar's camati, the king gives sign of recognizing the Dharmapuram's lineage. In turn, the smarta brahmins are jealous of Agamic practices, and also apparently quite ignorant of them. In the end they pay for their ignorance; the strength of Tiruvampalatecikar's position wins out. With that win come the spoils of patronage. If there is any reliability whatsoever in this story about Tiruvampalatecikar, it would seem to rest with this concern. An allegation of sudra status would be serious only if it interfered with the centre's sphere of operations.

Patronage and Temple Administration

As late seventeenth-century text, the Varnasramacandrika was compiled well after Dharmapuram had begun to flourish as a centre controlled by a lineage of non-Brahmin preceptors who were themselves life-long celibates. Its conclusions undoubtedly reflected Dharmapuram's interests, which entailed much more than ritual considerations. For example, while exalting the status of the teacher who is naisthika, the text never denigrates the grhastacarya, the teacher who is a householder. The sivacarya, the initiated priest who conducts the rites in the temples, falls under the category of grhastacarya. According to the Agamic system, only those priests who had living wives are entitled to serve in temples.

By the time the Varnasramacandrika was compiled, the centre had

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a vested interest in the temple priest's performance of temple rituals that went well beyond the location of Kurunanacampantar's camati. Well before it produced the Varnasramacardrika, Dharmapuram had begun to acquire control over the administration of certain rituals in a network of temples in the Tanjavur and nearby Trichonopoly Districts. The increasing influence Dharmapuram and the other centres had begun to wield in temple administration is recorded in their numerous copper-plate grants that span several centuries and come from several types of donors.[646] By the eighteenth century, the Dharmapuram Adhinam was one of several non-Brahmin centres that were being given administrative control over land or income endowments (kattalais) made to temples for the upkeep of specific daily rituals.[647] These kattalais effectively controlled the resources needed to maintain the temple rituals and thus figured importantly in the existence of the temple as an economic institution in pre-colonial South India. Rights to oversee these endowments were often allotted by ruling and other groups and thus guaranteed the controlling institutions significant economic and

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[646] Among Dharmapuram, Tiruvavatuturai and Tiruppanantal, there is a collection of over sixty copper-plate grants, few of which have been published. Future work will concentrate on these grants.

[647] For examples of these kattalais and grants, see Travancore Archaeological Series, vol. 1, nos. XVI and XVII, which discuss the Tirukuttalam Plates of Sivala Varagunarama alias Pandya Kulasekharadeva Dikshitar, dates saka 1670, in which a kattalai is endowed to the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam; and A.R.E. no. 420 of 1918, from Vaitisvarankoil, which records that the temple tank, Nacciyar shrine, and its mantapa were renovated during the time when Kaderayer was governing Sirkali Sirmai (around 1720 CE), which was during the time when Muttukumaracuvamittampiran, a disciple of Sivananacampantar of the Dharmapuram matam was the endowment manager.

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political power.[648]

Complete discussion of the influence wielded by a centre such as Dharmapuram awaits more study of the pattern of specific endowments to the velala lineages, and on the whole pattern of endowments in pre-colonial India from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, but I will conclude my discussion with some comments on the patronage that Dharmapuram and other centres received.

The velala lineages were named as agents to oversee the administration of kattalai endowments by groups such as the Setupatis of Ramnad[649] and the Tontaimans of Puttukkotai.[650] These groups were on the political and geographical periphery of activity in the Tamil countryside. These ruling groups essentially came up from the ranks of local "chieftains" or groups that wielded some localized authority or power. Though often from caste groupings that had some martial background, these groups were clearly not from "ksatriya" castes, or the warrior castes extolled in classical Hindu thought. Rather, their origins were often "low-caste", however appropriate this classification may be inasmuch as classical varna stratification rarely matched social reality.

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[648] See Arjun Appadurai, "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350-1700" in South Indian Temples: An Analytical REconsideration, ed. Burton Stein (New Delhi: 1977).

[649] An example is an unpublished copper-plate, dated 1763, from the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal. The donor is Nilaiyitta Muttuvatukanatapperiya Utaiyarttevar, a Setupati from Iramanatapuram.

[650] An example is the unpublished copper-plate, dated 1603 from Tiruvavatuturai. The donor is Rekunata Vanankamutittontaiman. This example, and the one cited in the note above are two of several examples.

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The rise to power of these ruling groups in the outlying areas such as the Ramnad District (the place of Kurunanacampantar's origin) and the Puttukottai District is related to the disintegration of Vijayanagara control in the whole of the Tamilnadu area. Once central authority was weakened, groups on the periphery could begin to push for power. At the same time, the velala caste network represented by the members of the Saiva centres like Dharmapuram was well established throughout South India by the seventeenth century. As an agrarian-based caste grouping, it exercised a great deal of control over agrarian production, and hence over the local economy which was land-based.[651]

Two inter-related features of the velala spiritual lineages's make-up gave them the ritual qualifications to mediate in the affairs of the temple, which played an important role in the local economy: their institutional asceticism and their identity as a spiritual lineage. Their institutional asceticism not only distinguished them from the agrarian groups out of which they came, but it also assigned them a role that mediated between that of the sponsor of an endowment (for example, a non-ascetic velala) and that of donee, the temple deity (or individuals who shared the deity's identity). The identity that a member of the velala lineage gained from the rite of initiation accorded him participation in the deity's identity: the initiate was filled with the essence of Siva (the sivatva) upon nirvanadiksa. The lineage's proximity to the temple also provided their patrons with

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651 See David Ludden, "Agrarian Organization in Tinnevelly District" pp. 108-21, for discussion of the velala position in agrarian production.

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spiritual benefits in the form of blessings and honours that enhanced the donor's overall prestige.

For groups such as the Setupatis and Tontaimans, patronage of these centres served both to cement ritual ties with these velala groupings and to garner influence over agrarian production, which was vital to any consolidation of political power in South India at that time. In addition, the ties to religious centres located in the Kaveri basin, the traditional home not only of the Cola empire but also the main area of nayanmar devotions, helped legitimate the claims to both status and power that the Setupatis and Tontaimans were making. Through their connections with these religious lineages, the new ruling groups fostered a link with classical dynasties. Both the religious lineages and these ruling groups found these connections mutually beneficial.

Any conclusions based on these observations on the general situation in South India at the time the Varnasramacandrika was compiled must remain tentative until more detailed work is done on the whole pattern of endowments up to the colonial period. What is important for our purposes here is the correlation between Dharmapuram's claim to ritual status that is recorded in the Varnasramacandrika and the actual role it played (and still plays inasmuch as it still manages major landholdings in conjunction with its administration of a network of temples) in the social landscape of South India.

As was indicated above, the story of how the Varnasramacandrika came to be compiled centres on a relationship with the king and refers both to Dharmapuram's role in temple administration and to patronage by

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Govinda Diksitar. Though reference to Govinda Diksitar is itself apocryphal[652] - he lived at the time of Kurunanacampantar, the founder of Dharmapuram, and not at the time of Tiruvampalatecikar - the reference is quite important. Govinda Diksitar was an advisor to Accuytadevaranayaka, a ruler of Tanjavur installed by the Vijayanagara king at the end of the sixteenth century, the period of the decline of the Vijayanagara empire. Portrayed in the account as connected to the Vijayanagara empire, the king and his followers represent an old order troubled by the existence of Dharmapuram as an institution: the followers of the king doubt the legitimacy both of Kurunanacampantar as a preceptor and of the association or network based on the "fictive" or spiritual ties of the centre's lineage. At the time the Varnasramacandrika was compiled, there may very well have been doubts in the air about the propriety of the institution, for the arguments presented by Varnasramacandrika defend the lineage's legitimacy. And, apparently these arguments were convincing, for the king's advisor not only accepted Dharmapuram as an institution, but also strengthened its role in temple affairs.

But was Kurunanacampantar really a sudra? He, like almost everyone else associated with the non-Brahmin centres like Dharmapuram, came from a set of velala caste groupings. How much they can be considered sudra depends largely on the viewpoint of the person

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652 See Sahityaratnakara, Composed by Yajnanarayana Diksita, Court Poet of Raghunata Nayaka, Ruler of Tanjore during the first half of the Seventeenth Century, ed. by T.R. Chintami (Madras: 1932), for a traditional account of how Govinda Diksita accompanied Cevappa Nayaka to Tanjavur during the time that nayak rule was established in Tanjavur.

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deciding. On the basis of the regime they follow, the members of tthe lineage can hardly be called sudra. That is the whole point of the Varnasramacandrika. Yet, neither it nor the tale about why it was written claims a status other than sudra for the members of the lineage; rather both the story and the text argue that the members' spiritual purity, acquired through personal austerity, grace and purification rites of initiation (diksa) offset any state their varna rank might impute. This acquired purity accords them no change in rank; instead it challenges the nature of that rank. Perhaps the clue to why a text like the Varnasramacandrika was compiled ultimately lies not so much in its appeal to outsiders, to the smarta brahmins who appear in the account, but to others much closer to home. After all, upstart dynasties like the Setupatis of Ramnad and the Tontaimans did show some alliance with these lineages, and their role in temple affairs.

This role is too often overlooked in our understanding of what a religious centre like Dharmapuram is. Matas are usually thought of only in terms of monasteries or seminaries, as places where individuals worked out their salvation. In treating the centres this way, we miss what may have been their most important function: a means through which various groups established ritual links that had ramifications going well beyond the spiritual to the larger social realm.

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CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has attempted to examine the nature of a related group of religious institutions in South India, the three Saiva centres known as the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, the Dharmapuram Adhinam, and the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal, all located in the Tanjavur District of Tamilnadu, India. Preliminary research indicated that these centres have historically been part of a web of relationships that tied them to the activities of the state, the general populace, and ritual specialists in pre-colonial South Indian society. In light of the complexity of these interactions, it was recognized that models of monastic retreat and seminary yielded incomplete and sometimes distorted pictures of the institutions in their social context in both pre-colonial and present South India.

This work approached a variety of sources in order to gauge the institutions' scope of activity. These sources ranged from classical material, inscriptions, hagiographies, doctrinal and ritual writings, to contemporary records, first-person observation and interviews. One observation that emerged from the sources consulted is that these institutions developed as a result of a combination of social factors that included migrations of peoples, changing state structures, and the

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evolution of particular ritual patterns. Moreover, these institutions continued to respond to the changing character of South Indian society as the state and society underwent alterations in the different periods of South Indian history from the end of the Vijayanagara period to the present. Mindful of the dynamic character of these institutions, this thesis has endeavoured to discover what might have been the defining characteristics which gave them their basic structure which then evolved and changed through time.

In addressing the question of basic structure, I observed that though these three institutions are conveniently called Saiva matas, the matam and the religious institutions, presently known as the Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam, the Dharmapuram Adhinam and the Kasi Matha of Tiruppanantal, represent two different abstract entities. The matam is a part of the temple complex, a place where ritualized gifting occurs. This gifting initially took the form of food offerings to ritually designated individuals which in turn was generalized into religious charities offering food and shelter to various groups. As part of the temple complex, matas quite often housed religious groups such as those I studied, but the matam and the religious institution defined by the group are not coterminous.

The groups I studied which are housed in matas are above all aggregates of religious individuals who are tied together by "fictive kin" ties. They are individuals who see themselves as related to each other through their relationship to a line of preceptors, from whom they are reborn through the rites of initiation. I have discussed in some

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detail the nature of the different stages or categories of initiation, since it is initiation that after all makes one a member of the religious community. I emphasized that initiation is visualized as a rebirth, and that the person responsible for the rebirth is the guru, who imbues his disciple with his own essence, the essence of Siva, much as a father is perpetuated in his son. Initiation, with its language of rebirth highlights the fact that membership in the group is defined by this intimate, kin link with the guru, the preceptor who is head of the institution and who is entitled by his status of patriarch to father offspring through the ceremony of initiation. In fact, I argue that the religious institution is embodied in the guru, as seen in the way the term atinam is applied both to the institution (or spiritual lineage) and the head of the lineage. In my discussions of the Saiva institutions and definitions of them as lineages I have used the term lineage to designate not only the linear succession of guru to guru, but also to include all of those who participate in the broader family, the disciples as well as their preceptors. The model that I have chosen as most representative of the Saiva institutions thus is lineage grouping, and not monastery or seminary. I examined how group membership is articulated in their ritual patterns. These patterns centre around the tutelary deities of the group, the most important of which is the specific cult object that the lineage inherited from its founder.

In the first portion of my thesis I also established that the self-identity of the group as a whole is intimately tied in with its description of its "pedigree" or its genealogy, tracing the history of

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its founders back to an historical founder and thence to mythical and divine founders and that the membership in the group for any disciple is a rebirth into this family that was initiated by the founder.

My study of the lineage's genealogy identified some of the seminal sources that contributed to its development. I showed that the velala lineages as they emerged in the sixteenth century were a combination of several religious backgrounds, not all of which are acknowledged in today's genealogies, or paramparai literature. I demonstrated that there is a high probabilty of some cittar, or non-orthodox mystical background in the velala lineages. This background, though ignored in the paramparai literature, is still recognized in the ritual patterns undertaken by the members of the lineages. No hard conclusions were drawn as to why this background is ignored, but it was suggested that it may reflect changing definitions of legitimacy, a hypothesis to be tested in later work. In this section, I also suggested that the development of institutional structure of these lineages was influenced by the settlement in the Tamil area by groups originating originally in Northern India. Their influence, combined with earlier Tamil patterns of religiosity contributed to the development and emerging group identity of the velala lineages.

I sought to substantiate my claim that lineage is the defining feature of these Saiva centres by a careful look at their central rituals. At each of the centres, the central ritual is a ceremony to honour the founder of the lineage. It is very much a family ritual, a commemoration of the death anniversary of the head of the community,

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that honours the founder of the lineage by establishing a line of continuity that runs from him through the tutelary deities of the group, to the present head of the institution and his disciples. In a temporary collapse of time, this line of continuity establishes group identity by constantly reaffirming the relationship of the present group to the past.

In seeking a paradigm for the ritual of gurupuja, the worship of the founder of the lineage on the anniversary of his death, I was led to examine well-known commemorative ceremonies in the general Indian tradition. I thus began to look at the sraddha ceremony that living members of a family perform for their fathers and more distant ancestors. I was struck by the fact that the sraddha ceremony is above all a ritual feeding of the ancestors represented by certain invited guests, a rite which I saw replicated in the communal feeding of mahesvarapuja that is an important part of the gurupuja celebration. Moreover, I recognized that the temple inscriptions which referred to matas, structures that were part of the temple complex, inevitably recorded endowments for the purpose of feeding or providing ritual food offerings to ascetics, tapasvis, brahmanas and others. These feedings took place in matas. The frequency with which these rites are mentioned led me to conclude that the matam, as an ancillary structure of the Hindu temple, was in fact the designated place where these ritualized feedings would occur. The connection which brought ascetic lineage groups into the temple complex by housing them in matas thus appeared to be partially explained by the paradigm of sraddha, which I diagram

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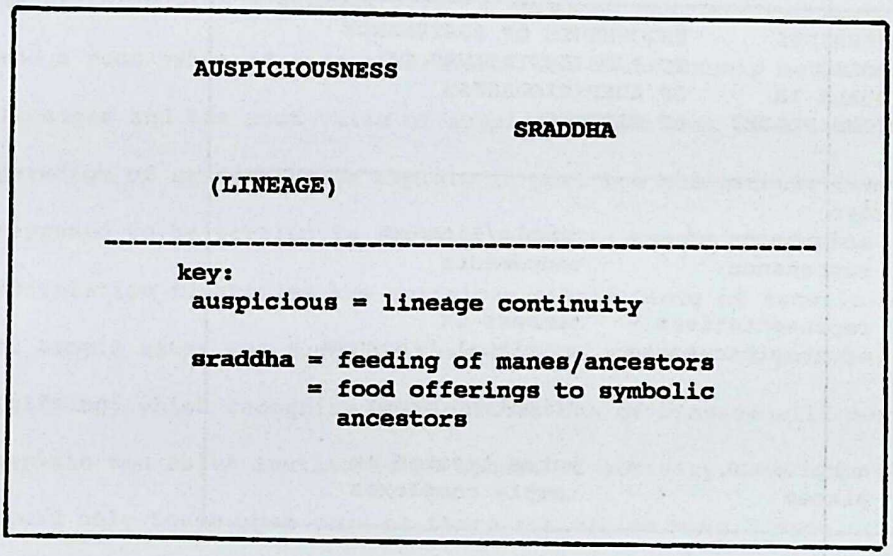
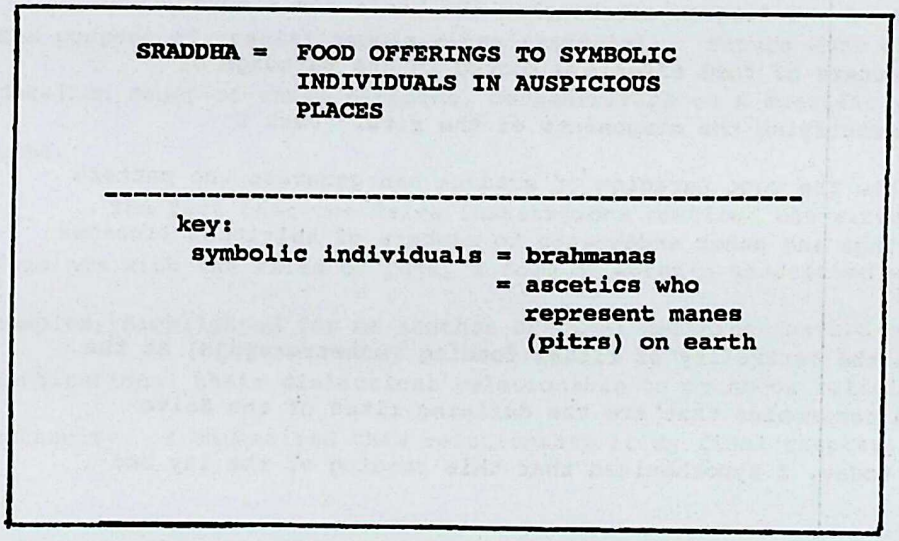
below.

In part A of the diagram, I relate the rite of sraddha to the value of auspiciousness, which is exemplified in lineage continuity.

A.



B.



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C.

FOOD OFFERINGS TO SYMBOLIC INDIVIDUALS IN AUSPICIOUS PLACES	=	ENDOWMENTS OF SUSTENANCE TO REPRESENTATIVES OF OF AUSPICIOUSNESS AT TIRTHAS

key:

endowments of sustenance	=	temple/lineage endowments
representatives of auspiciousness	=	members of spiritual lineages
	=	"fictive" manes
auspicious places	=	matas located in temple complexes

Part B of the diagram establishes the basis for a more generalized pattern of food offerings rooted in the paradigm of sraddha, by identifying the components of the rite. Part C demonstrates how the root paradigm of sraddha can generate the pattern of food offerings and other endowments to members of spiritual lineages in matas.

Given the centrality of ritual feeding (mahesvarapuja) at the commemoration ceremonies that are the defining rites of the Saiva institutions today, I hypothesized that this feeding of the lay and

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ascetic (tampiran) members of lineages should be seen as related to the sraddha ceremonies that we know so well from orthodox smarta handbooks and the puranas. Above and beyond the complex changes that must have occurred to the ritual patterns and the make-up of the Saiva institutions, gurupuja, the central rite of the velala lineages, retains an affinity with a sraddha rite, a ceremony that affirms both lineage and a root value of auspiciousness. The relationship between ascetic lineages and the root value of auspiciousness that is articulated in the paradigm of sraddha helps explain in part how the ascetic lineages happened to be settled in matas attached to temple complexes. This correlation identifies the religious significance of ascetic settlement at temple sites and suggests that careful analysis of patterns of dana (gifting) which recognize the implications of lineage will more fully explain the Saiva institutions' sphere of activity. In this thesis I could only touch upon some of those activities when I made reference to gifts made directly to the velala lineages as well as grants which assigned lineage members the role of administering endowments made for the purpose of special temple rites (kattalai). Future work will pursue detailed study of these patterns, concentrating on a specific periods of time.

The fact that the Saiva institutions combined the ritual feedings with the rites of puja, a form of worship associated with temples, highlighted for me another critical defining feature of these institutions: their dialectical relationship to orthodox religious authority. I emphasized this relationship in my final chapter, when I

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came to the issue of caste in these institutions.

I have argued in this thesis that while caste is obviously part of the self-definition of the Saiva lineages as demonstrated in the paramparai literature which emphasizes the velala background of the preceptors, there is little evidence that caste was as vital an issue historically as it might have been at the turn of this century. I decided to include a consideration of an attack on the velala institution that surfaced later in history in part because it reinforced my understanding that the essence of the Saiva centres of the Tanjavur District of South India lies in their lineages and the relationship of a larger community to the figurehead of preceptor. From my reading of the Varnasramacandrika and the account of the circumstances that led to its compilation, I concluded that the attack that caused the text to be written made a very specific challenge. The challenge was not directed against the right of a low caste individual (sudra) to perform rituals, but to assume the role of preceptor. I read this material as implying competition between different religious centres for the limited commodity of patronage. What I recognized as significant in the account was that the velala institution so much identified with the preceptor/disciple relationship that an attack on the institution took the form of a challenge to its preceptorship and the legitimacy of that preceptorship. The ramifications of such an attack related to the survival of the lineage, both within its own context and within its larger network of activity and patronage.

My general conclusions then are that the institutions I studied

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are in essence to be definied by reference to the concept of lineage. The institutions are made up of sharply defined groups, each of which is tied together in a relationship to a founder who was active at a specific place, the site where the matam that houses the lineage is located. In my understanding, lineage takes as its root paradigm the family: through the ceremony of initiation the preceptor fathers the disciple, who gives up one family to join another. Secondly, I believe that what makes the group distinctive concerns ritual practices, and not specifically doctrine. These distinctive rituals are closely related to lineage; they encode the knowledge transmitted from the first preceptor to the group and are part of the group's inheritance.

I do not address the question of the extent to which this analysis holds for other medieval Indian religious institutions. My limited knowledge to date suggests that the model could be tested on other groups. In North India, for example, the Vallabha pustimarga seems to offer a close parallel.[653] The religious group is organized into competing family units; the cult object of every splinter group is also associated with the founding member of the family. Here the paradigm of the family is literal as well as metaphorical; Vallabha was married and the succession passed through sons and grandsons, with collateral branches of the family at times forming splinter groups. Similarly, the Sankaradeva Vaisnava community in Assam is structured into family groups that define themselves by their relationship to

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[653] Phyllis Granoff, personal communication, suggested this and the next example.

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founding figures and differ on point: of ritual. In both these groups, as well with the groups I studied, there is considerable literature about lineage and about the transmission of the teachings. Future work might test the appropriateness of "dictive" lineage as a model for understanding the workings and social interactions of other medieval Indian religious institutions. The other direction I hope to pursue is a detailed study of the sphere of activity of one of the Saiva centres in a specific period of time.

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APPENDIX A

Temples and Kattalais under the Administration of Tiruvavatuturai

Places Where Temples Located

Tiruvavatuturai
Tiruvitaimarutur
Mayilatuturai
Tirupperunturai
Tiruvililimilalai
Tiruppalamannipatikkarai
Tirumanturai
Tirumangalakuti
Suriyanarkoil
Tirunilakkuti
Tirunallur
Tiruvalangatu
Vanapuram
Tirunelveli
Kurukutturai
Arumukaneri
Karaikkantam
Naracinkapettai
Pariyangayanallur

Places Where Endowments Are Located

Minaksi Temple in Madurai
- Tanakoneriyappamutaliyar Kattalai
- Avutaiyappapillai Kattalai

Tiruccentur
- Tiruppani Kattalai
- Aruppani Kattalai
- Annatana Kattalai
- Visaka Kattalai
- Pratosa Kattalai

Papanasam
- Picca Kattalai

Tirukurralam
- Vilapucai Kattalai

Kataiyanallur
- Vilapucai Kattalai

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Kalitaikkuricci
Vilapucai Kattalai

Valliyur
Utaiyamantantantam Kattalai

Srivaikuntam
Cirikalacanti Kattalai

Temples and Endowments Under Dharmapuram's Administration

Places Where Temples Are Located

Vaitisvarankoil
Tiruppanantal
Tirukatavur
Kuttalam
Tiruninriyur
Tiru Dharmapuram
Tiruvaiyaru
Manakkuti
Karunkuilnatapettai
Vilanagar
Tirunallur
Peralam
Tirupuvanam
Accalpuram
Tirukurukki
Mayuram
Tirumullaivayil
Sirkali
Karrkuti
Talanayar
Tirukolili
Tiruchchirapalli
Dharmapuram

Places Where Endowments Are Located

Mayuram
Kumara Kattalai

Tiruvarur
Ranja Kattalai

Tiruvitaimarutur
Piccai Kattalai

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APPENDIX B

Tiruvavatuturai Adhinam Pantara Cattiram:

Works Published in Tiruvavatuturai's Pantara Cattiram Series:

Taktina Murtittecikar
- a) Tasakariyam
- b) Upayateca Pahrotai

Ampalavanattecikar
- a) Tasakariyam
- b) Canmarka Cittiyar
- c) Civacciramatteliru
- d) Cittanta Pahrotai
- e) Cittanta Cikamani
- f) Upaya Nittai Venpa
- g) Upatesa Venpa
- h) Nittai Vilakkam
- i) Aticaya Malai
- j) Namaccivaya Malai

Cuvaminattecikar
- a) Tacakariyam

Pin Velappattecikar
- a) Pancakara Pahrotai

Velappattecikar
- a) Pancakara Pahrotai
- b) Nanapucaiviti
- c) Marapattaranai

Stray works from Tiruvavatuturai:

- a) Meynana Vilakkam
- b) Perur Tirattu
- c) Kuru Tirattu
- d) Civapirakaca Vilakkam
- e) Catamani Malai
- f) Avirotta Untiyar
- g) Tiruporur Canniti Murai Tirattu
- h) Civapirakaca Kattalai
- i) Cittanta Kattalai
- j) Tiruvalavai Kattalai
- k) Civanana Tipam

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Dharmapuram Pantara Cattiram:

Maccu Cettiyar
- a) Nanapucai Tiruviruttam Karuturai

Cirrampalanatikal
- a) Civapirakaca Kurukkal

Tattuva Pirakacartecikar
- a) Tattu Pirakacam

Tiruvarur Kamalai Nanapirakacar
- a) Civananta Potam
- b) Atturita Kattalai
- c) Piracata Kattalai
- d) Civapucai Akaral

Nanacampantar Campantattecikar
- a) Paramanta Vilakkam
- b) Civapokacaram
- c) Cokkanata Venpa
- d) Mutti Nittayam
- e) Tiri Patarta Rupatti Tacakari Akaval

Alakiya Cirrampalattampiran
- a) Tiri Patarta Tipam

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GLOSSARY

abhiṣēka (Skt): anointing of deity with consecrated water, ghee, milk, honey and other fluids; investiture of king; consecration of lineage head.

ācārya (Skt):
ācāriyam (Tam) preceptor; teacher, master.

ācāryābhiṣēka (Skt): consecration of preceptor, done through unction; Agamic consecration of preceptor or temple priest.

adhikāra (Skt): competence: qualification; office assuming of office.

ātīṉam (Tam): religious organization made up of members of spiritual lineage, which administers affairs of subordinate centres.

advaita (Skt): nonduality.

Āgama (Skt): scripture; one of twenty-eight Saivite scriptures.

antaryāga pūjā (Skt): internal worship, when the rite is interiorized.

anubhava (Skt): personal or individual experience.

arcanā (Skt):
arccaṉai (Tam) offerings of flowers, leaves, light accompanied by recitation of sacred names of deity, done on behalf of a donor.

arthajāma (Skt):
arttayāma (Tam) final sacred period or day marking final temple service.

āśrama (Skt): stage of life; classical Hinduism counts four: studenthood, householder, forest dweller, renunciate.

ātman (Skt): spirit; self.

ātmārthapūjā (Skt): worship for one's own sake; private worship, following some sixteen step procedure as temple worship, but done at home, or outside temple precincts.

bhakti (Skt): religious devotion.

paṇṭāram (Tam): treasury, treasure house, a member of a spiritual lineage who looks after the finances of endowments

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made to temples; a non-Brahmin ritual specialist.

bhautika (Skt): of the world.

bhoga (Skt): enjoyment; empirical experience.

bīja (Skt): literally "seed"; the root symbol syllable of a deity or sacred uttering.

bilva (Skt): tree (Aegle Marmelos) whose leaves are used in worship of Siva.

brahmadēya (Skt): a village granted to Brahmins.

bubhukṣu (Skt): desirous of worldly enjoyment.

caryā (Skt): external worship.

cattiram (Tam): a charity house where food is given out especially to Brahmins and ascetics and the destitute.

choultry (?): a travellers' resting place.

dakṣiṇā (Skt): renumeration made to officiants of ritual; renumeration made to temple priest.

dāna (Skt):
tāṉa (Tam) gift.

darśana (Skt): sight; vision of deity.

devadāsī (Skt): dancing girl in temple.

devadāna (Skt):
tēvatāṉam (Tam) gift to god and hence to temples.

devastāna (Skt):
tēvastāṉam (Tam) place of god; temple.

dharmaśāstra (Skt): Hindu religious law.

dīkṣā (Skt):
tīṭcai (Tam) initiation rites.

- **samayadīkṣā (Skt):** "regular" initiation; first level of saivite initiation.
- **viśeṣadīkṣā (Skt):** "special" initiation; second level of saivite initiation.
- **nirvāṇadīkṣā (Skt):** transforming initiation; third level of saivite initiation.

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dīkṣitā (Skt): one who has been consecrated in preparation for ritual performance or sacrifice.

dīkṣitar (Skt):
tīṭicar (Tam) special class of temple priests who officiate at the Citamparana temple.

garbha-gṛha (Skt): literally "womb house"; the innermost sanctuary of a temple.

gotra (Skt): exogamous clan grouping claiming descent from single sage.

gurumūrta (Skt):
kurumūrtam (Tam) place of guru; image/symbol installed over preceptor's camati.

gṛhasta (Skt): state of being a householder; marriage.

gṛhastācārya (Skt): a preceptor who is a householder; temple priests fall under this category.

jajmāni (Hindi): a system of relations connecting landowning patrons with others performing services for a share of the harvest.

jāti (Skt): sub-caste groups into which one is born and within which one must marry.

jñāna (Skt):
ñāna (Tam) knowledge; consciousness; spiritual insight.

jñāni (Skt): one possessing true knowledge.

kālāmukha (Skt): an unorthodox Saivite sect.

kāṇiyāṭci (Tam): hereditary right to land, estate.

kāpālika (Skt): member of unorthodox Saivite sect known for their carrying of skulls and unusual cultic practices.

kaṭṭaḷai (Tam): command, order; endowment for temple rite.

kōyil (Tam): palace; temple; sanctuary.

kriyā (Skt): personal comportment; act, action.

kriyāpāda (Skt): ritual section for Agama.

kuṅkuma (Skt): red powder sacred to and used in worship of goddess.

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kuṭi (Tam):	resident; tenant; residental place.
linga (Skt): linkam (Tam)	the anionic symbol of Siva.
māhēśvara (Skt):	a devotee of Siva; a Saiva ascetic.
māhēśvarapūjā (Skt):	literally worship of mahesvara; a ritual in which the followers of the Saiva velala lineages are fed.
maṇḍala (Skt): maṇṭala (Tam)	sacred diagram; period of time, approximately forty-five days.
maṇḍapa (Skt): maṇṭapam (Tam)	pillared hall or porch; pavillon with temple or other place used for reception of deity; hall decorated for festive occasions; public hall or rest house.
maṭha (Skt): maṭam (Tam)	building that is part of temple complex where ascetics and others are fed; residence of ascetic; feeding house; rest house.
maṭhādipati (Skt): maṭātipati (Tam)	head of matha; overseer of affairs for matha.
mantra (Skt):	sacred utterance.
mudrā (Skt):	hand gesture used in rituals to express complex meanings; digital mantras.
mūlavar (Tam):	temple deity; immoveable and permanent stone figure who resides within the temple sanctum.
mūrti (Skt):	temple deity; sacred being; image used in temple worship.
naiṣṭhikabrahmācārya (Skt):	life-long celibacy; requisite state for membership in velala lineages.
naiṣṭhikabrahmācārin:	one who is a life-long celibate.
naimittika (Skt):	"optional"; rites done when occasion demands.
naivēdya (Skt): naivēttiyam (Tam)	one of the sixteen rites of adoration which constitute daily worship; the offering of food to a deity; the meals taken by the velala religious preceptors.
nakṣatra (Skt):	lunar asterism; one of twenty-seven "houses"

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through which moon orbits sun.

ñāṉōpatēcam (Tam): teaching of spiritual insight; initiation.

nāṭu (Tam): country, district, province, rural tract; a division of medieval Tamil countryside.

Nāyaka: name of local ruler in Tanjavur and Madurai following Vijayanagar Empire.

nāyaṉmār (Tam): Tamil hymn singers.

nitya (Skt): eternal.

nitya pūjā (Skt): worship that must be done daily.

otuvār (Tam): saivite devotional singer who sings hynms of nayanmar in Siva temples.

paddhati (Skt): Agamic ritual manual.

pañcākṣara (Skt): the "five syllables"; the mantras sacred to worshippers of Siva, i.e. namaccivaya (namah sivaya), homage to Siva.

Pañcarātva: Vaisnava sect.

paradeśi (Skt): a religious mendicant; a person from another
paratēci (Tam) country.

parārthapūjā (Skt): worship for the sake of others; public worship performed in temples.

Paraśiva (Skt): supreme Śiva.

pāśa (Skt): matter; the world; source of bondage; one of three
pācam (Tam) eternal entities of Saiva Siddhanta.

pati (Skt): lord; soveigh spirit of being; rule, siva; one of
pati (Tam) three eternal entities of Saiva Siddhanta.

prākāra (Skt): the wall surrounding a shrine or temple complex.

pāśupata (Skt): worshipper of Siva in his form as Pasupati, "lord of Beasts"; member of unorthodox saivite sect.

pāṭhaśālā (Skt): religious school.
pāṭacālai (Tam)

prasāda (Skt): grace; substance offered to deity and then imbued

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piracātam (Tam)	with deity's grace, distributed to devotees.
prāyaścitta (Skt):	reparation ritual.
pūjā (Skt): pūcai (Tam)	worship which consists of sixteen acts of adoration.
rudrākṣa (Skt):	dried berry of shrub (Elaeocarpus ganitrus) sacred to Siva; beads given to Saiva initiates upon diksa.
sabha (Skt):	the assembly of a brahmadeya.
sabīja pañcākṣara (Skt):	the s syllable mantra, namaccivaya, that is prefaced with the syllable om, the bija or seed into which all the force of the mantra is condensed.
sādhanā (Skt): cātanām (Tam)	means; spiritual discipline.
śakti-nipāda (Skt): catti-nipāta (Tam)	descent of divine grace; literally the descent of sakti.
śakti (Skt): cakti (Tam) catti (Tam)	power; femine power, the goddess (especially the consort of Siva); power of deity.
samādhi (Skt): camāti (Tam)	state attained through deep meditation; the shrine built over the resting place of one in deep samadhi; "tomb" for ascetic.
saṁskāra (Skt):	rite of passage.
Śaṅkarācārya (Skt):	spiritual successor of the philosopher Sankara.
sannyāsa (Skt):	the state of renunciation; fourth stage of life.
sannyāsin (Skt):	one who has renounced the world.
sat-śūdra (Skt): asat-śūdra (SKt):	"pure" sudra. "impure" sudra.
śiva bhoga (Skt):	transcendent enjoyment or experience of Siva.
śivācārya (Skt): caivācriya (Tam)	initiated priest who conducts temple ritual.
śivatvā (Skt):	the essence of Siva, the nature of Siva.

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smartha (Skt):	orthodox brahmin.
śraddhā (Skt):	a ceremony in honour of the dead; ritual offerings to ancestors, first performed at close of funeral.
stalapurāṇa (Skt): talapurāṇam (Tam)	the traditions of a sacred site; the work chronicling the site's traditions.
śūdra (Skt):	varna category, fourth of the four groupings, considered inferior to three twice-born varnas.
svamai (Skt): cuvāmi (Tam)	Lord.
taluk (?)	an administrative subdivision of a district.
tampiraṉ (Tam):	ascetic member of a velala lineage.
tīrtha (Skt): tīrta (Tam)	a ford or place of crossing over; a sacred shrine or sacred site; the consecrated mixture of rose water, milk, etc., distributed to devotees after abhisekam.
tyāga (Skt):	renunciation; giving something up.
upacāra (Skt):	rites of adoration or homage performed for deity or lineage head.
upadeśa (Skt): upatēcam (Tam)	teaching; instruction; inculcation.
ūr (Tam):	village; a non-Brahmin settlement.
utsava (Skt):	temple festival.
vaidika (Skt):	"Vedic", specifically religiously orthodox and learned.
vāmacārya (Skt):	unorthodox religious practices
varṇa (Skt)	caste grouping.
vēḷāḷa (Tam):	a non-Brahmin agricultural caste with Tamilnadu.
vibhūti (Skt): vipūti (Tam)	white ash sacred to and used in worship of Siva.

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